

Scotpress

Enterprise —



Log

a STAR TREK
fanzine

Entries 62

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ScoTpress - Sheila Clark, Valerie Piacentini, Janet Quarton & Shona

Hello everyone, and welcome to the 'new look' Enterprise - Log Entries.

As Valerie said in the last editorial, we've decided to make some changes here at Scotpress. There are several reasons for this.

First of all, for some months now we've not been totally satisfied with the printing quality of our zines - and in particular, the quality of the *reprinting* of the more recent zines. There are several reasons for this - after three years of pounding out stencils, both my typewriter and Valerie's are beginning to show signs of protest. We've been asking far more of them than any self-respecting portable typewriter should ever be expected to do. Neither is cutting stencils properly any more, and it shows.

The duplicator, too, is beginning to show its age. We got it fully overhauled nearly three years ago, but it too is coming to the stage now where we really need to spend money on it if we plan to keep on using it as steadily as we have been.

Another factor we have had to consider was the recent loss of two of the 'Chain Gang'. Five collating and myself stapling was the ideal number; and although the surviving members of the Chain Gang are willing to soldier on short-handed, we felt we were taking advantage of their willingness to help.

At the same time, Janet and I have both indulged ourselves by getting computers and printers; Janet so that she could more easily compile data on Star Trek, myself for the word processing facility (it's so easy to edit and rewrite manuscripts with a word processor!) We were very impressed by the flexibility of printing this made available (especially because, since I started putting out zines, I've envied those editors who had access to typewriters with little details like italics.)

We decided therefore not to spend money on the typewriters and duplicator, but instead to use our computers and printers to produce the zines, and to get them photocopied. The total cost is a little higher than duplicating, hence the increase in price - and for the same reason, future reprints of older zines will also be slightly dearer - but we think that our prices are still comparable with anyone else's.

We hope you'll agree with us that this is a change for the better, and that the improved look is worth the extra cost. (There should also be fewer typos!)

At the moment Valerie still doesn't have a computer, but we're working on her! ((She isn't particularly machine-minded (Janet is, and she is handling all the technical side of working out print codes, etc, so as we're pointing out, all she'll need to do is work from the notes Janet gives her) but she's beginning to think that maybe it's not such a bad idea after all.)) For the moment, although I've done both this month's zines (for the practice) Valerie will be doing the one-offs on an ordinary typewriter and I'll be doing the Enterprise - Log Entries on the computer. Once we twist Valerie's arm strongly enough, we'll revert to the old system with Valerie doing the Log Entries and me doing the one-offs.

(Doing it this way at the moment is giving us more flexibility in layout for Log Entries (a novel doesn't need quite the same flexibility, although when you read *The Mark of Cain* you'll see how Janet and I have experimented, to let changes in typeface help the mood of various passages.)

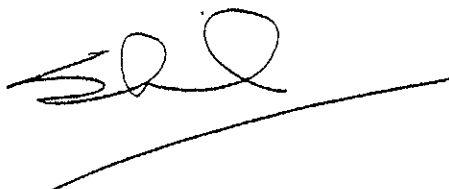
We would like to thank Allison Rooney, Hilde McCabe and Frances Abernethy very much for all the work they have done for us in the past. They - along with Lorraine Goodison and Cory King - have given us a great deal of help over the years, and we do appreciate it very much. Zine production involves a lot of 'behind-the-scenes' people - the writers, the artists and the editors are the 'visible' contributors, but the unseen ones play a very large part too. Without them, we would have found it very difficult to put out zines as regularly as we have done.

The first story in this issue is an alternate universe one by one of our Italian friends. She wrote it in Italian, then translated it herself (which saved Valerie from having to enlist her father's help again). Her letter said, "I have translated into what I hope is English". It is. Manuela, and we hope to get more from you soon.

For the observant among you, there is a spelling anomaly in the zine: one writer used 'loth', and another, 'loath', for the same word. These are acceptable alternate spellings and I decided to leave them as they were in the manuscripts, as I've found that people who stick with one way of spelling something that has an acceptable alternative do so because they positively *prefer* that way, and I think that altering it to my preference is merely making a change for the sake of making a change - even in the interests of consistency.

If we are to continue putting out zines every two months we are desperately in need of submissions: both of stories and poetry. We need short stories for Enterprise - Log Entries or Enterprise - Personal Log, and long ones suitable for publication as a one-off. Don't say you can't write - it has been said that everyone has at least one story in them. If you request advice or help with a story we will always do our best to help in any way we can. Don't worry - we don't bite.

We are also looking for artists - now that we are having the zines photocopied we can print more artwork. Please send a sample of your work as, if possible, we prefer to assign stories for illos.

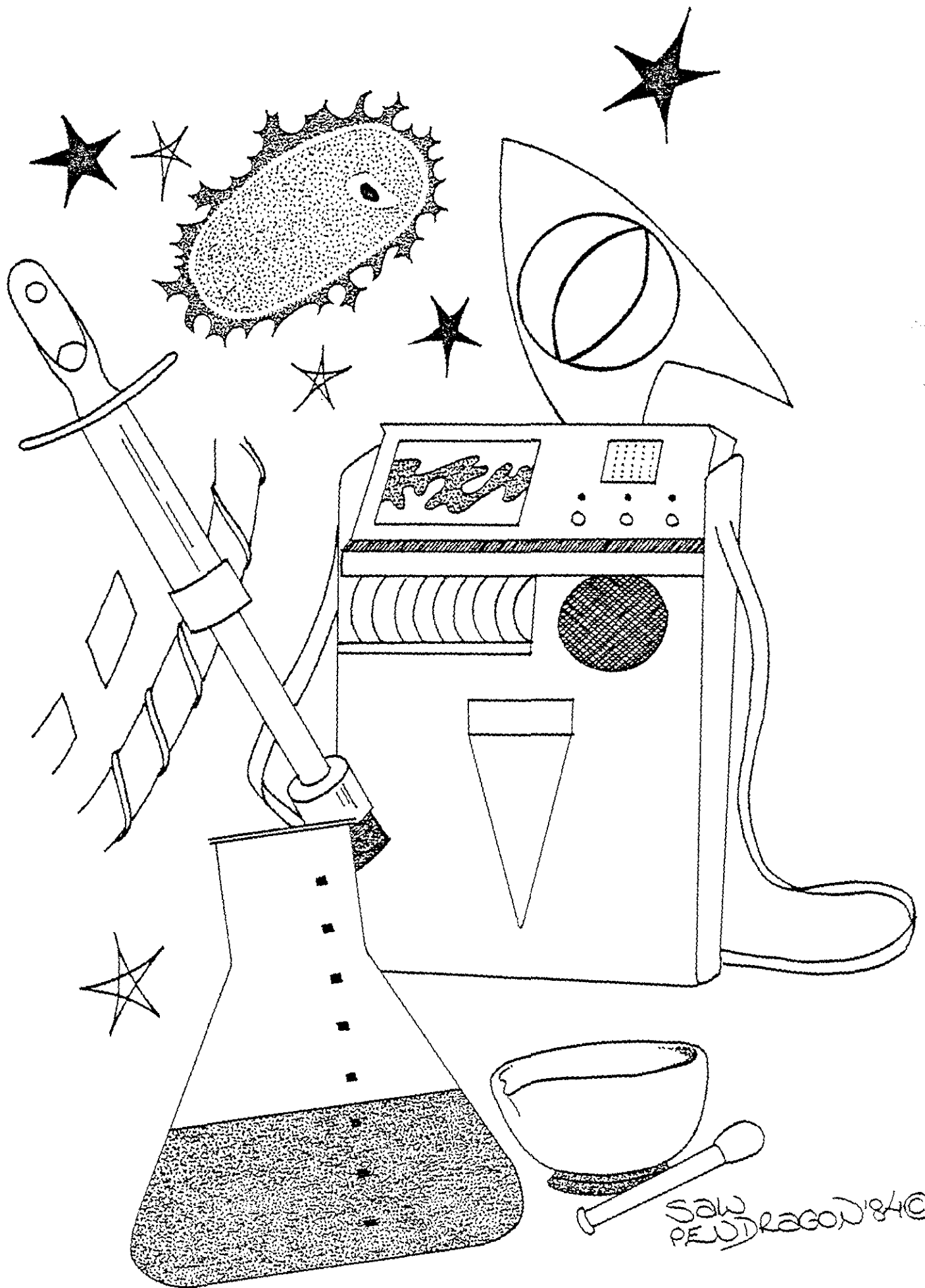
A handwritten signature in dark ink, consisting of stylized, overlapping loops and a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

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Saw
PEUDRAGON '84 ©

ONCE UPON A TIME THERE WAS A LITTLE SHIP...

Manuela Reitano

At last the dream of the young Captain James Tiberius Kirk would come true! During all the difficult years of study at Starfleet Academy, he had been encouraged by the great wish to become, one day, commander of a Starship, giving orders to everyone...

But his disappointment was great when he knew from Admiral Peter Jackson that his first command would be the U.S.S. Enterprise. The story of the Enterprise was well-known to all the cadets at the Academy. The ship had been built more than a century before, even older than the other starships. And recently the ship had spent more time in orbital drydock for repairs than in deep space. It was practically a wreck!

In the Admiral's office, Kirk could hardly believe his ears. "And I have to go out in space for five years with *that* ship? But sir, it's suicide!" protested James Kirk.

"Don't listen to all the gossip, Jim," answered the Admiral. "People like to exaggerate. Well... I have to admit that the hull is not definitely a *la mode*, but I assure you that no-one will notice it out there."

James Kirk could not refuse, much though he would have liked to. After all, this was his first command; it was the occasion to prove to everyone his capability - even if it was on board the Enterprise, the worst ship in all Starfleet!

The Admiral, dismissing him, said, "Goodbye, Captain - and good luck with your first command!" While he was saying this and stretching out his hand to Kirk, with the other hand he touched wood...

James Tiberius Kirk, now Captain of the U.S.S. Enterprise, left the office. He didn't know yet whether to consider the whole thing as an honour or an insult. His only hope was all would be for the best.

From the outside - and at a distance - the ship looked fairly good, even beautiful. Its old-fashioned white shape stood out against the darkness of the sky. Hundreds of technicians were completing the repairs. The closer he approached the ship, the more he realised what was its real condition: most of the hull was covered with rust, and roughly patched up. The sight of the ship wrung his heart.

One of the technicians told him that the transporter was out of order and that he had to use the 'emergency entrance' to go aboard. The 'emergency entrance' was an old rope ladder, like those once used by alpinists, and it arrived in the lower part of the starship. Collecting all his energy and patience, Kirk began to climb. The steps seemed never to end, and after what seemed like an hour, Kirk, tired, angry and sweating, set foot on board the Enterprise, the ship that would be his home for the next five years.

Kirk found himself in a very long corridor with plenty of doors.

"Where on Earth is the Engineering section?" he asked himself. He drew out his *Guide to the U.S.S. Enterprise* (2000th edition, completely renewed). Kirk carefully turned over the pages and followed the route indicated to reach the Engineering section.

There was absolute chaos inside it. Some boxes, still closed, were piled up; technicians arranged some mechanical parts, others checked out circuits. The whole was filled with clamour... and even some curses.

Kirk felt he was about to have a headache. Then in the crowd of technicians and boxes he saw a man with an absorbed look that once in a while took a glance at some papers he had in his hand. According to the description he had had - Kirk thought - that man had to be the Chief Engineer, Lt. Montgomery Scott. Kirk directed himself towards the man and called him. But Scott did not answer him: what with the noise and also because he was too absorbed in his work.

"Connect tap D to cable E... cable E..." He drew out a handful of cables. "And where is cable E? Whoever wrote these instructions must have been completely illiterate!"

"Mr. Scott!" repeated Kirk, louder.

"Yes? What's that, now?" Scott turned his head.

"I'm Captain James Kirk, Lieutenant. I now command this ship. You are Scott, aren't you?"

"Aye, sir, Lt. Montgomery Scott, Captain. Welcome on board!" answered the Engineer, stretching out a hand dirty with grease.

"Yes... I see," Kirk replied, looking at the hand. Then he turned. "How long will it take to get this ship out of dry dock?"

"Well..." said Scott. "If it depended on me, I *could* get her out now. Though - unfortunately - we do have some problems that make the ship a little unsafe. The transporter doesn't work..."

"Yes, I've noticed that. Why haven't you done anything about it?"

"Captain, if I don't have replacement parts I can do very little. You see, this is old stuff, and at the depot they refuse to give me the only bits they have; they told me they were saving them for the museum... I've tried everything I can think of, sir - "

"Then try the things you *haven't* thought of!" answered Kirk, somewhat furious. They gave him his very first command, and now he could not even leave dry dock! Kirk left the Engineering section, leaving Scott to get on with finding a method of assembling the engines and repairing the transporter.

In the meanwhile, Kirk decided to explore the ship and he began to wander the lonely corridors, arriving near one turbolift that, oddly enough, was working. He was beginning to develop a liking for this old near-derelect... *Let's hope that the crew is not made up of disagreeable and boring personnel*, he thought. *Five years don't go by all that fast!*

The turbolift left him on Deck Seven, where, according to the *Guide*,

Sickbay was located. Considering the condition of the ship, it was important that there was at least a good Doctor on board. Kirk drew out the *Guide* and turned over the pages.

"Yes, there it is, Deck Seven. 'Leaving turbolift No. 4, you'll find yourself in a long corridor, whose construction goes back to Stardate 0094.3. The late Spatial style has been influenced by the Roman one in...' Kirk decided to skip the artistic description of Deck Seven and turned over the pages of the *Guide* till he found the right page. 'Advancing now on the right, you'll arrive at Sickbay, the second door on the left...' Kirk stopped and looked up: SICKBAY - CHIEF MEDICAL OFFICER DR. LEONARD MCCOY.

Kirk entered the room, which was quite deserted. From the next room he could hear a feminine voice that was singing softly. Kirk made for the door, and saw a young woman, definitely attractive, who was knitting. When the woman realised that there was someone else in the room, in the twinkling of an eye she concealed her work and drew out some papers, feigning to examine them with great attention.

"Dr. McCoy isn't here?" asked Kirk, as if he had noticed nothing.

The woman looked up and saw the stripes on Kirk's sleeve. She smiled, and said, "No, Captain. I'm the Head Nurse, Christine Chapel. Dr. McCoy will be here soon. He's bringing his medical equipment on board, and with the transporter out of order, it takes a lot of time... "

"I understand, Nurse Chapel. As soon as he arrives, tell him that I want to see him in the briefing room," said Kirk.

"Yes, sir," answered the nurse.

Kirk made for the door, then stopped. "And you can go on with your work, nurse... with your knitting... "

The woman blushed like a tomato... but fortunately James Kirk was already out of Sickbay, continuing his tour of the Enterprise.

With his nose in the pages of his guide, Kirk didn't realise until he had bumped into him that he had encountered the only other person who was passing along Deck Seven at that moment.

"Oh, I'm sorry!" said Kirk. Then he looked up... and saw Spock.

As the Captain was clearly at a loss what to do or say, Spock decided to introduce himself. "I'm Lt-Commander Spock, sir. I will be Science Officer of the Enterprise for the next five years."

"I'm glad to see you... Mr. Spock. I'm Captain James Kirk." Meanwhile, he thought, *So this is the Vulcan of whom I heard at the Academy. I didn't think he was so ugly! If I didn't know, I could have mistaken him for a maniac... It will be wonderful to have him here for five long years...* Then he continued, "Mr. Spock, I was inspecting the ship. Would you like to join me?"

"Of course, Captain," answered the Vulcan.

While they were making for one of the turbolifts, Kirk asked him, "How long have you been in Starfleet, Mr. Spock?"

"Approximately ten years, Captain. My former commander was

Christopher Pike, but not for a long time."

"Why not?" asked Kirk.

"Well, Starfleet gave him this same ship, but he preferred to resign rather than accept. It was a very logical choice for him. And if I may say, Captain, yours has been an illogical one."

"Perhaps, Spock. But do you really think that I am completely out of my mind? This is *my* ship; even if I have to push her through all the Galaxy... "

Scott's voice interrupted their conversation. Kirk pressed the intercom button. "Kirk here."

"Scott, Captain. Everything's in working order - even the transporter!"

"The transporter? But you told me that - " began Kirk.

"Aye, sir. But you also told me to try what I hadn't thought of yet. So... er... I... "

"Yes, Mr. Scott. I'm listening."

"Well... I... Sir, I stole the pieces!" answered Scott.

"You... *WHAT?*... It doesn't matter, Scott - you can explain it later. Is all the crew on board?"

"Aye, sir."

"Good. Prepare to leave orbit. And quickly, before someone discovers what you have done! Kirk out."

He turned to Spock. "I'd better get to the bridge." He set out along the corridor, but Spock stopped him.

"With respect, sir, I think the bridge is *that* way."

"Really? Are you sure, Spock?" asked Kirk, looking in the *Guide*.
"Yes, you're right. It's the other way. Let's go!"

In less than three minutes, Kirk and Spock arrived on the bridge of the U.S.S. Enterprise. For Kirk, this was the greatest moment of his life. Even if he was Captain of a tin full of holes, he was happy.

The faces of the officers on the bridge were completely unknown to him, but fortunately Spock was there to do the introducing.

The communications officer, Lt. Uhura, was a beautiful negress from the African virgin forests. She obviously felt uneasy in her new uniform (as from where she came from, they didn't wear clothes). However, just to give a touch of '*couleur locale*' to her dress, she was wearing some strange amulets.

Pavel Andreivich Chekov was the navigator. He looked very young and Kirk thought of himself some time ago, when he was an inexperienced lieutenant... "I Pavel Chekov, Comrade. I from Starfleet Academy of Great Russia, Comrade," he said with pride.

"Well, Mr. Chekov," said Kirk, "even if this is not 'ship of Great Russia', I hope you will like it here." And Kirk was tempted to add 'Comrade'.

Enough of that! An African native ready to do the 'dance of rain', a Russian navigator who... what else had he to expect?

There was Sulu, helmsman. "I'm Sulu, very honourable Captain," and he bowed profoundly according to the oriental custom.

Guess if he has carried his sticks for the rice... Kirk thought.

The crew was rather good. A Federation of Planets ready to welcome all sorts of alien races could certainly allow itself to have a cosmopolitan crew like that.

"Good. Get ready to leave orbit soon." Then he called Scott in Engineering. "Scott, we are ready to leave. Stand by with impulse power." Kirk looked around. The only thing now was to cross his fingers and hope...

"Scott to bridge!"

"Kirk here. What now, Mr. Scott?"

"Captain, the engines don't work!"

"Five minutes ago, everything was 'all right'. What's happened now?"

"I don't know, sir. I did my best... "

"Try everything - possible or *impossible*! This ship has to move!" Then he glanced at Spock standing by his side, saying, "Now we have only a miracle left... "

"If I may say so, Captain, we will need a very big miracle to move this ship... "

Kirk looked at him, half angry, half amused. But Spock was completely right.

Uhura said, "I have an idea, Captain. Let me do it."

Before Kirk could give her any answer, Uhura called someone down in the drydock - in an incomprehensible language. Then she addressed the Captain. "If *this* not work, we push ship."

At the beginning, the Captain didn't understand, then on the main viewscreen appeared the figure of a man with his head and body painted in bright colours. In his hand he held a stick, at the top of which were some feathers even more coloured than his body. The man began a strange dance, moving his stick up and down.

"Who is this man?" asked Kirk, completely puzzled.

"Is sorcerer, sir. With tribe, always works!" answered Uhura.

Kirk said nothing. After all, that was an idea as well. Hadn't he just said to Scott to try the impossible?

The sorcerer had only been dancing for a few minutes when Scott's voice came from the intercom. "Captain! Everything's working now! I don't know *how*... "

"It doesn't matter. Impulse power, Mr. Scott!"

Then he began to dictate in his log.

Captain's Log, Stardate 1124.7. Captain James Tiberius Kirk commanding U.S.S. Enterprise of the United Federation of Planets. Our five year mission will be to explore strange new worlds, to seek out new life and new civilisations. We hope to boldly go where no man has gone before...

The U.S.S. Enterprise, like a rickety vehicle, left drydock triumphantly, heading out for space.

The sorcerer watched the ship going away.

"Poor crew," he said. "They will never succeed!"

But history gave him the lie.



In Search of a Sun

The land was red and hot - alien,
And he felt more alien than they
As he stood beneath that burning sun.
It caressed him with its crimson rays
And caused the sweat of fear
To fall from every pore.
What would tomorrow hold?

Child of Vulcan, but man of the universe.
Filled with a dream for tomorrow,
Knowing that what he sought
Would never be found
Upon the land of his birth.
And yet he also wondered
What it was that he sought...

Perhaps it was that other half of him
Which he knew he lacked.
He knew that he needed to be whole;
He needed another... something... to make him one.
So his decision had been made,
To leave the land of logic
And go against his tradition and heritage.

He left in search of a sun
Which would make him shine.
He left with outstretched hands,
And vowed that he would become a link
In the universal chain
Of love and truth and peace -
Reaching out for a brother.

Karen Hayden

family heirloom

1 a Spencer

The goblet had been in Kirk's family for centuries; indeed, private estimates had laid a rather high value upon it due to its obviously great antiquity, and consequently the Kirks had not widely advertised its existence, unwilling to sell (due to a naturally sentimental attachment) but more so because of the somewhat uncharacteristic superstition with which the Kirks regarded their family heirloom.

The result of their understandable reluctance to publicise their possession of the cup was a confusion as to its actual age and origins, apart from a vague tradition that it had been part of some larger Celtic treasure hoard, and had been taken by the Scots Kirks on their emigration to the North American continent as a guarantee against the expected financial hardship - and as a symbol of the Kirks' hoped-for good fortune in the difficult early pioneering years of that new frontier. It was regarded still with equal respect by the Kirks pioneering the equally hazardous final frontier of space.

The cup bore the intricate circular designs typical of early Celtic art, the fine grooves inlaid with a thin covering of gold, cool and pleasant to the touch, it was evocative of an era bred of a passionate history chronicled by visionary poets and linking each generation from their beginnings.

On the death of James Kirk's father, the goblet has been willed to his elder son, George Samuel Kirk. However, following the Denevan tragedy, it had been held in trust for Peter Kirk, to be passed to his uncle, James T. Kirk, and his progeny in the event of his nephew's death. That event had recently occurred due to a severe attack of chorio-meningitis, a disease to which the Kirks had an hereditary tendency; and in Peter's case, there had been complications.

The young Kirk's death had deeply disturbed the Captain of the Enterprise, beyond the grief and anger he had experienced at the futility of his promising young nephew's death. He was now the last of the Kirks. The bare reality of his loneliness suddenly overwhelmed him, filled him with an unaccustomed, disorientating sense of apprehension, and intensified his well-hidden but all too accustomed sense of emotional vulnerability. Never had Kirk been more grateful for Spock's presence at his side... and never more aware of the constant threat of losing him.

The two friends now sat quietly in the living quarters of the family home on Deneva where Peter Kirk had lived with his maternal grandmother. Kirk held the goblet, absently turning it over and over in his restless hand, until Spock, leaning forward, closed his own steady grip around Kirk's busy fingers.

"Jim... you must try to relax... Come, give me this." He prized the small, delicately carved Terran antiquity from Kirk's tense grasp, meaning to place it on the nearby table. Suddenly, however, the Vulcan stiffened. Kirk felt the abrupt movement.

"Spock? What is it? What's the matter?"

For a moment the Vulcan's eyes were quite blank of expression, inward-looking. Alarmed, Kirk removed the cup and almost immediately the dark eyes cleared. Looking somewhat confused, Spock frowned and shook himself slightly.

"Spock!" Kirk's taut nerves snapped and he almost sobbed the name. "What is it? Spock, are you all right?"

Spock looked deep into the hazel eyes, noted the circles of exhaustion... Too many gruelling missions, the deeply felt personal loss, the shock of realisation, combined with the constant strain of command... and now this, a minor mental aberration on his part, but - what was it the Humans said? - the final straw.

Indeed, Kirk was stretched to his limit. Discussion of that brief yet intense influx of telepathic sensations must wait. For now, Jim desperately needed rest.

"Nothing, Jim... Really, nothing at all to worry about... We're both tired, that is all."

"Spock - I know you. You're keeping something back. Explain!" he demanded in his command tone.

"Jim, please... You have been without sleep now for several days. You cannot go on like this. We will talk further when you have slept. Jim, it's been almost a week - you realise?"

"We will talk *now*." Kirk was determined; his fear that Spock might also be ill, a fear made more menacing by his heightened sensitivity and tiredness caused his voice to be brusquer than usual. "Sleep can wait - I intend to know *now*..."

Kirk ducked away, and almost made it... but not quite. Here was one man as determined as Kirk, especially on matters concerning the Captain's welfare. Spock regretted having to use the nerve pinch; Kirk would be... irritated on waking, reflected the Vulcan ruefully, but his friend so desperately needed the rest he so stubbornly refused, and McCoy was not due to return to Deneva until the following morning - a now-controlled outbreak of Antarean fever aboard having precluded his accompanying them. *At least now*, Spock thought, *Jim will sleep...*; his action had been... logical.

Really, he thought with an exasperation he quickly suppressed, *for a highly intelligent man, Jim could often, with regard to his own well-being, be as stubborn as...* He searched for a suitably tenacious comparison, but, on finding none, an inner voice, immediately and indignantly suppressed, suggested - himself? A wryly reluctant smile fleetingly touched his lips, then, sighing, he lifted the Human easily, carrying him through to the sleeping quarters, to lay him gently on the bed. About to retire to the guest room, something about the face of his friend - usually so firm, even in sleep, but now pale, vulnerable, almost forlorn - kept him hovering indecisively at his side. Absently, he drew up a coverlet, then hesitantly reached out long fingers to the troubled forehead; the contact was brief, but a moment later the young face softened into a gentler repose. He would sleep peacefully now. Satisfied at this, Spock, himself more than a little tired, quietly left for his own room.

Kirk awoke feeling refreshed and more at peace than he had been since receiving the news of Peter's death. He had known that sense of peace before, that... warmth which permeated his being and yet was not quite of him.

Spock, he thought, smiling a little. Conned again. Swinging his legs to the floor, he stretched his limbs for the first time in... too long, he realised, opening the blinds as he passed into the adjacent bathroom, permitting the brilliant Denevan sunshine to flood the room with new light.

Showered and dressed, Kirk wandered into the living room.

"Good morning, Jim. How do you feel?" Spock rose as he entered.

"Better - thanks to you. But what I ought to feel is good and mad, Mister. In fact, I should put you on report," he retorted with mock severity.

The Vulcan lowered his eyes. "I... I ask forgiveness; but you needed sleep." He paused then continued stiffly, "I must also beg forgiveness for a further insubordination which is, nonetheless, I know quite unforgivable. I had not your consent, yet... I touched your mind." The dark head bowed.

Meanwhile, Kirk had been regarding him with something akin to amazement. "Spock?" But the pose remained rigid.

Kirk crossed to him then, swiftly, seizing the slim, tense shoulders, forcing his friend to look into the suddenly serious, suspiciously bright hazel eyes. "Spock... you... you surely can't mean you still feel that you must ask my... my permission to touch my mind? Spock, how can you think that? Don't you know how much ... how very much... I love you?" The last words were whispered, locked away as they usually were in the Human's heart in deference to the Vulcan's reticence. Kirk thought then that he had painfully embarrassed his friend, and dropping his hands to his side, biting his lip, he would have backed away, but strong hands restrained him.

"Jim." Kirk looked up at the tenderness in the resonant voice. "I... thank you, my friend; the freedom to touch the mind of one so dear to me is... a great gift which I will treasure always... and never abuse. And... I believe you Humans have a saying... the - feeling - is mutual."

Kirk regarded him for a moment. "I am so grateful that you should say that, Spock - my brother." The eyes shone gold with that sincerity which, so long ago, had captured and held Spock, held him willingly despite being almost too hurt ever to trust or believe in friendship, but drawn irresistably to the unusual Human who was his Captain.

They gripped hands firmly for a long moment. Spock then led Kirk over to the table already laid for breakfast.

"Will you eat now? Indeed, you must eat, Jim. It has been so long since your last meal... You are looking quite undernourished."

"Pity Bones isn't around to hear that/" grumbled Kirk. "Maybe then he'd lay off with the diet sheets. Thanks." He accepted the steaming mugful of coffee, taking a deep gulp, then sank into a nearby chair. "Spock - about last night." He saw Spock's reluctant expression, and said firmly, "I'm fine now, I promise you, Spock. Now, out with it. What was it all about? You were holding the cup, and then... Well?" he prompted.

"It was most strange, Jim." Spock frowned slightly, remembering. "I found myself inundated by strong visual images - disjointed, unconnected certainly but nonetheless vivid, snatches of periods from Terran history... and I felt a certain... power?" he shrugged slightly, "from the goblet. I regret that I am unable to be more precise. They were fleeting telepathic impressions, nothing more."

"Can you describe some of these images, Spock? Any instantly

recognisable details?"

"It was almost as though I was watching a tricorder playback of jumbled snatches of Earth history... I recognised, for example, among others, an image of life in the Wild West of the North American continent; also an extremely striking tableau of some kind of Warrior... on horseback; it seemed that he held the goblet aloft. This was then replaced by another set of less defined images... and finally... a view of an environment, alien, but not too dissimilar to that of Earth. However, though graphic, most of these sensations occurred in such rapid succession that I was unable to derive further information to assist in forming any hypothesis as to the meaning of it all."

"Speculation, then."

"I would venture that this goblet is some form of... telepathic amplifier."

Kirk heard him with some amazement. "A telepathic amplifier? But... this cup's been in my family for... countless generations! There's never been anything... bizarre or mysterious about it, except its origin; although admittedly the family has always been... remarkably possessive of it." Frowning, he rose to pick up the goblet, examining it thoughtfully.

A summons at the door bringing no response from his absorbed Captain, Spock moved to answer it. McCoy sauntered in, his casual demeanour belied by the searching look he instantly fastened upon Kirk.

"Mornin', Spock. What's that you're so interested in, Jim? Jim!" he repeated, on receiving no reply.

"Hmmm? Oh, hi, Bones. Did you say something?"

"Never mind, never mind. Did you make sure he got some sleep, Spock?"

Spock looked a shade discomfited as Kirk grinned at him. "He did everything but sing me a lullaby, Bones."

McCoy relaxed slightly as he observed that some of the crippling tension had left the Captain's body, and some of the old spark had returned to the golden eyes. *Trust Spock*, he thought, allowing his gratitude to show in the glance he exchanged with the Vulcan. Spock inclined his head in acknowledgement.

McCoy then eyed the table appreciatively. "Ah - breakfast. Good. I'm starving - and so, I hope, are you, Captain." McCoy allowed the warning to enter his voice.

Kirk merely grinned; he had discovered, somewhat to his surprise, that he was indeed feeling hungry.

After having breakfasted, Kirk rose to go and pack. "I won't be too long; I only have a few things to pack. Everything else has been... taken care of." His voice was brisk, but nonetheless Spock moved nearer, supportively. Kirk understood, and expressed his thanks silently, grateful for the presence of his two friends in the cold emptiness of the house.

Kirk retired early that night, virtually bludgeoned into his cabin by a hypo-wielding McCoy and a very determined First Officer. He attempted to read, but weariness soon overcame him and he settled down to sleep, glad to be back in his own bed in his cabin on his ship. However, he did not pass

a peaceful night; his slumber dream-filled and restless, although uponwaking he could remember nothing of what had disturbed him.

It was as he was about to leave for the Bridge the next morning that he felt a sudden... compulsion to examine the goblet once more. He stared at it, recalling what Spock had said, tracing a finger along the fluid curves and whorls. He jerked his finger away, startled; it was almost as though an electric current had passed through his entire body and he leaned, trembling a little, against his desk, observing with a disturbing sense of detachment the way his fingers clutched with convulsive possessiveness about the goblet. He attempted to put it down, but felt no surprise when he was quite unable to unclench his fingers.

Reaching for the intercom with his free hand, he suspected some form of muscular paralysis, but was instantly aware that there was... something more; he never made contact with the button, for then his eyes were pulled to the far corner of the cabin where the air seemed to shimmer and thicken as in a heat haze, congealing gradually into the compact muscular shape of a man... a leader, a tribal warlord, resplendent in his battledress, regal in his bearing.

A strong hand was raised to point at the cup, and as the arm beckoned, a thought pierced his mind.

"Come. They await you. Come, seed of my seed. Come, Chosen One. Come. C'Maal. C'Maal."

The mind voice faded, and with it the apparition, as Kirk collapsed across the desk.

On the bridge Spock stiffened. Then, abruptly turning over command to Sulu, he strode to the turbolift.

The door to Kirk's quarters opened in response to his voice command, and he entered, taking in the scene at a glance.

"Sickbay. Dr. McCoy to Captain Kirk's quarters. Urgent."

Without waiting for an acknowledgement, Spock crossed to where Kirk lay sprawled, made to lift him in his arms.

The Human stirred, then, "Spock?" His voice was very weak.

"It is I."

"Spock... C'Maal. C'Maal. Please. C'Maal. Promise. Please."

Spock did not query the plea. "I promise you, Jim. We go to C'Maal."

"Can always trust you," murmured Kirk, then, with an effort, "don't worry... All right... Must accomplish..." Kirk slumped forward again.

At that moment, McCoy erupted in and immediately went to work with his scanner.

"Doctor?" Spock's voice was abnormally harsh with worry.

"I dunno, Spock. There's nothing physically wrong with him that I can detect. Course, I'll have to run further tests." The doctor's gaze fell to Kirk's hand and he attempted to remove the cup.

"He won't let go... it's like some muscular spasm. Look, Spock, the more I try to prize it away, the more tightly he grips. What is that thing, anyhow?" he demanded.

"Certainly not what it seems, Doctor. I believe it has affected the Captain in some way."

"A cup? How could... Oh, never mind. Spock... see if you can get through to him with the meld. And no claptrap about his consent. Just do it!"

Spock made to reply, then changed his mind, gently placing his hands on the smooth face. Suddenly, his hands flew away. McCoy moved to him, steadying him.

"Spock? What is it?"

"There is another... presence... in the Captain's mind. I am unable to penetrate the barrier it has caused to be erected around his consciousness; at least not without causing psychic shock."

"This presence - is it... can it harm Jim?"

The Vulcan thought for a moment, then replied slowly. "The presence was not... hostile... No, protective, rather, but very determined that its purpose should not be known. It did, however, repeat a request - no, a command - the Captain made of me, prior to your arrival."

"Well, go on!" McCoy said impatiently.

"I must take the Captain to the planet of C'Maal."

"C'Maal? But that's a deserted planet! It's only recently become habitable again... its people destroyed themselves, didn't they?"

Spock regarded him non-committally. "So I have always believed, Doctor," was the only answer he would give.

"Sickbay to Bridge. Spock, get down here!" McCoy's unceremonious demand snapped from the intercom.

"On my way, Doctor. Mr. Sulu, take the con."

When Spock arrived at Sickbay, he found a flurry of activity around Kirk's bed. Kirk himself was restrained, yet still thrashed wildly as though in extreme pain.

"Doctor?" The word contained all Spock's anguished worry, despite the implacable mask which, if anything, seemed stonier than ever.

"Spock... He's been calling for you; he's not unconscious, but he's not fully conscious either. It's almost like you in a healing trance."

Spock moved to the bed, meaning to take Kirk's hand. "Where is the goblet?" he asked suddenly.

"He wouldn't let it go, so I gave him a shot of muscle relaxant."

"And that is when this problem occurred, I presume? McCoy - " Spock almost sighed. "Bring it at once."

His expression forbade further argument and McCoy, with a savage look, retrieved the cup from his office.

"Here you are, you arrogant, over-bearing..." While McCoy was searching for a new insult, Kirk had seized the cup and the restless tossing ceased.

"Ungrateful?" supplied Spock, laying one hand on Kirk's arm, the other on the Doctor's shoulder. "Forgive me, Leonard," he said softly.

McCoy raised his blue eyes to anxious dark ones. "Forget it, Spock," he answered quietly.

Spock nodded his thanks and continued. "We are two days from C'Maal. It is logical to assume that the Captain will begin to exhibit similar symptoms as we approach the planet. I advise you to be prepared for a recurrence of this."

With the briefest hesitation, Spock laid his hand on Kirk's shoulder, gripped it tightly, then turned to leave.

"Geo-synchronous orbit established, Mr. Spock," announced Sulu.

"Very good, Lieutenant." Spock left the command chair and crossed to his science console. Sensor readings registered an Earth-type planet with evidence of a now fully emerged balanced ecology, a re-establishment of plant and lower animal life forms following the dissipation of the last traces of the poison which had first stilled all life. It had been a world held in a stasis by the tenacious grip of long-ended war and was now slowly stretching its earthen limbs to awaken like some sleeping giant.

Suddenly, Spock's attention was caught by a steady, powerful signal being transmitted from deep within the planet's surface. A swift check confirmed it to have an artificial source; the Vulcan slowly straightened and was unsurprised by McCoy's urgent,

"Spock! Sickbay!"

"Inform the Doctor that I will be there directly, Lt. Uhura." He was in the turbolift before he heard Uhura's immediate compliance with his order.

Upon his somewhat precipitate arrival in Sickbay, he found Scotty sitting beside the Captain's bed, listening intently to Kirk's confused utterances in an unrecognisable, strangely melodious language.

"Doctor?" Spock nodded towards Scott. "May I enquire the reason for Engineer Scott's presence?"

"Spock!" McCoy was prevented from answering as, in response to the Vulcan's voice, Kirk shot up into an upright position, calling his name urgently and reaching out blindly for his friend, still however clinging to the goblet.

"Jim." Spock was there in an instant, taking the hands firmly in a reassuring grasp.

"C'Maal. C'Maal!"

"Yes, Jim. We have established orbit about the planet."

Kirk then began to speak once more in the alien, musical tongue.

"The time... of awakening?... Yes, awakening... the anointed? No... no, the... the Chosen One comes." Scott frowned in concentration as he translated.

In response to Spock's repeated enquiry, McCoy shook his head helplessly. "Don't ask me what's going on! Scotty says it's Gaelic of something, a dead language of the ancient Celts."

"Not dead, Doctor," Scott interrupted indignantly as Kirk fell silent. "I was brought up to speak the Gaelic as well as English and Galactic. Yon's a mite peculiar, mind ye, but it's recognisable."

"But Spock - why would Jim be speaking in an ancient Terran language?" McCoy wondered.

"I am confident that an acceptable explanation will soon be forthcoming, Doctor."

"Well, it'd better be soon, Spock; whatever's happening to Jim is dangerously increasing the metabolic rate - he's already pumped full of this stuff - " He waved the hypo under Spock's nose. Assuming an expression of great long-suffering, Spock moved the offending object aside and was about to deliver a crushing rejoinder when the event he had been anticipating occurred.

Kirk's eyes opened, filled with a blazing awareness. He swung his legs to the floor and stood surveying his surroundings. His gaze rested finally on Spock.

"Ah, Beloved of the Chosen One; it was foretold that there would be one such as you to accompany the Chosen One."

"Who are you?" demanded Spock.

"I speak for those who wait. For generations have we waited, and now... it is time." Kirk swayed and Spock moved swiftly to his side, supporting him. "Brother of his soul, touch his mind that you may know what must be done."

The Captain slumped forward; he was gently deposited on the bed and Spock positioned his hands for the meld, his face set into lines of concentration.

At last he drew back, addressing Scott with a decisive air.

"Mr. Scott, I shall require you in the transporter room." Turning to McCoy, he continued, "I believe your presence may also be advisable, Dr. McCoy. The Captain may be further weakened by what is to come."

"Now just hold on one minute, Spock." The irate Doctor seized his arm, forcing him round. "Just hold on and tell me what exactly is going on around here."

Spock sighed. "Doctor, time is of the essence. Your curiosity will soon be assuaged. Now, gentlemen, if you will please accompany me to the transporter room..." Spock bent to lift his Captain, and led the way to the transporter room, followed by a bemused Engineer and a thoroughly disgruntled Ship's Surgeon.

"Mr. Spock... these co-ordinates are underneath the planet's surface."

"I am fully aware of that, Mr. Scott. Please continue."

McCoy stood fidgetting on the transporter pad; he hated beaming down into the interior of a planet. Rematerialisation was infinitely more reassuring when accomplished under open sky, whatever its colour.

"Well, come on, Scotty, let's get it over with."

"For once I agree with you, Doctor. Please apply more haste, Engineer."

"All right... but I canna say I like it, Mr. Spock." He sighed as he worked the transporter and watched them break into a sparkle.

What was that cup the Captain had been so loth to part with, anyhow? Scotty was proud of his pure Celtic ancestry and had on those rare occasions when not immersed in the latest technical journal done a fair amount of research into Celtic culture; the designs engraved upon the cup certainly resembled examples of early Celtic art he had studied.

There was an unsuspected streak of pure romanticism in Scotty's soul which had been drawn to the mystery conjured by the enigmatic carvings, a mystery redolent of the mist-wreathed, brooding hills and still, secret lochs reflecting the sombre skies of his native Scotland. He experienced a sudden, heart-lurching sensation and realised with some surprise that his thoughts were of home... He frowned; the Enterprise was his home! He hadn't been homesick since... how long? *Far too long*, he recognised now. It was strangely melancholic - but pleasant - to want to see home again; there was a comforting sadness about it, like a Scottish drizzle when standing alone and at peace at the Kyle's edge. Perhaps it was time to return for a short while, to remember, to savour...

Aye, maybe I will at that, he thought, remembering with pleasure the sound of the Gaelic in his ears.

His thoughts were returned to the present as he acknowledged Spock's confirmation of a safe transportation.

The three had beamed into a large underground cavern, its walls unnaturally smooth in their curvature and finely engraved with the familiar circular designs of the Kirk goblet. At one end of the chamber a short rounded monolith projected from the floor. Spock suddenly registered that the carvings the upright stone bore were identical to those of the cup which Kirk still grasped firmly in his hand. In the centre of the stone was a rounded hollow. Without hesitation, Spock carried Kirk closer to the monolith and lowered the Human to his feet, touching his fingers lightly to his temple.

Immediately, Kirk regained full consciousness and moved silently forward to stand directly opposite the cavity. Raising the goblet in both hands, he announced in a clear voice,

"The Cup of C'Maal, the Key of Life, is returned."

With no real surprise, McCoy watched Kirk carefully, reverently, insert the goblet into the hollow.

For a moment, nothing happened, then as Kirk staggered back against his two friends, the whole cavern was immersed in a soft, golden glow whilst the monolith itself began to emit a steady hum and slowly pulsated through a muted spectrum of colour, like a fabulous prism of some mythical

wizard.

With a silent flash, a circle of intense white light resolved itself out of the kaleidoscope of colour which bathed the monolith; the luminous discoid gradually dimmed, resolved into a shape which eventually assumed the form of a slender white-robed female... young, McCoy observed, very young.

The newcomer regarded Kirk warmly. "Welcome, Golden One, the Chosen of C'Maal, Bearer of the Sacred Cup, Promised One of the Saviours.

"You have been faithful to your destiny and are come to release us as was promised - one of C'Maal, but yet not of C'Maal."

The steady gaze transferred to Spock. "And welcome to he who walks the corridors of eternity with the Chosen One. Thus it was foretold that their love is as pure and clear and fine as the crystals of Marani."

Kirk, now fully in command of his faculties once more, was untouched by this impressive - but uninformative - litany. "Uh... Madam, this is all... fascinating, but I *would* appreciate some clarification."

A smile gently touched her lips. "Such a one was *he* - impatient to know... So many of his line risked their homes, comfort... lives, even our future hope, unwittingly, in their impetuosity... but had it not been so, the last would not have come, as prophesied."

"EXPLAIN." Kirk was getting tired of this.

"Of course. I am Issolda, High Lady of the C'Maal. The story I am to tell you, you will find difficult to accept, but I swear that it is the truth.

"My people were as you Humans, Kirk, but whereas you, who seemed so primitive to those of us who lived amongst you, conquered your passions, we permitted their full reign and almost completely destroyed the world we lived upon - many plants, many animals, and so many people died. We had thought that that fate awaited all our people. Then the Saviours came to us. A great fleet offered the survivors life on other worlds, or sleep undisturbed until our world breathed again and a child of the scattered C'Maal should come to release us, as was fitting.

"C'Maal is our home. Many chose to slumber through the silent centuries to awaken to a restored world... but others, eager to live again, were spread across the galaxy. To one such was given, secretly, the Key to the Chamber of Awaiting, for its power was coveted by those who still sought for control and would have seized the Key at the first opportunity, to awaken the C'Maal again to the tethers of tyranny.

"The Bearer of the Key was my brother, the Lord Artara. To his line our Saviours told us would be born, after many centuries - during which time our world would heal itself - a Golden One who would journey across the gulfs of night to release us from our bondage."

"The Key... was the goblet," Kirk said slowly. "And my... ancestor... was a C'Maal?"

"Correct. My brother Artara took a Human to wife, and thus began the chain of life which was to bind you to your destiny as our new Saviour... You are much like him," the girl added softly. "He too was a great warrior in his own world, and in yours they sang of his valour and his justice. You are a worthy successor to him. We thank you for releasing us to new life."

"Glad to be of help," replied Kirk wryly, his mind spinning. *The Saviours - could they be the Preservers themselves? And Artara - his ancestor - the legendary Arthur of Celtic myth? The warrior of his vision?* Firmly postponing further speculation for later discussion with Spock, his practical mind returned his attention to the present situation. "What happens now?"

"I must awaken my people. Our world awaits us, has forgiven our treachery and bids us come to her again."

"We'd be glad to assist in re-establishing your people on the surface. My colleagues and I are representatives of a Federation of many planets who work for the good of all its members. We would supply any assistance you require."

"We will contact your Federation when it is time, Kirk. For now, my people must be alone - to learn to live again."

"As an official representative of the Federation, I can guarantee there will be no interference in the affairs of your planet, nor further contact until you so desire."

"I thank you... but you observe, should you wish it," Issolda offered.

"Nnooo. I think... this is something which should be for the C'Maal alone, Lady Issolda. My ancestor may have been a C'Maal, but that was long ago, and now I am an alien. The time of awakening is for the people of C'Maal alone." Kirk straightened his shoulders in an attempt to disguise his growing exhaustion. "We will return to our ship."

"You are indeed as wise as he, Kirk, seed of Artara." The girl inspected him then more closely, and the warmth of the dark eyes deepened. "Indeed, I recommend that th Chosen One should sleep though we awaken. He is weary."

"Sound medical advice, Ma'am." McCoy spoke for the first time, all else forgotten as Kirk turned pale and shuddered with repressed exhaustion.

Spock withdrew his communicator, then bowed formally to Issolda. "May your people live long... and prosper. Spock to Enterprise. Prepare to beam up."

Kirk accepted the proffered support of his friends gratefully, the accumulated strain of, and reaction to, the past weeks and their shattering events overwhelming him.

"Issolda... Good luck to you and your people."

"The Only One protect you, Chosen One," responded the gentle voice as Issolda remembered the prophecies of a future of galactic importance for this golden Human and the beloved one at his side. "May He walk with you in the future that awaits you both," she whispered as the transporter beam took them.

Three weeks later as the Enterprise was on her way for a complete overhaul following the gruelling missions of the past months, Kirk, felt fully recovered from the effects of the brief possession of his mind kayed by the goblet of C'Maal, now lost forever to the Kirks. The remarkable adaptability bred of years spent in deep space exploration had assisted in his assimilation of all that had happened.

However, Spock was now seated opposite his Captain, observing him quietly across the chessboard, and was concerned to note a well-concealed but - to Spock - obvious dejection in the slight droop of the broad shoulders. "Jim? What is it?"

"Hmmm?" Kirk looked up, then grinned. "Can't keep anything from you, can I?"

"No," answered the Vulcan matter-of-factly. "Tell me, then, what troubles you?"

Kirk shrugged. "I... well, I guess I feel... cut off." He gave a quick, rather embarrassed, little smile.

Spock looked at him, momentarily puzzled, then comprehension came and he rose swiftly to cross to the Human, raising him, turning him to face the dark, searching eyes.

"You mean... with your nephew's death, your last link with a family life..."

"Was gone... for good," finished Kirk flatly; he gave another very slight smile. "Sorry, Spock - I'm not very good company wallowing in self-pity like this."

"You never... wallow... in self pity, Jim - and your company is always... a joy to me. But Jim - you have a family - here on the Enterprise. Your family - the family which raised you - is gone; but there is a very loyal - loving - family for you here. In my family I am an alien - more so than my own mother - neither Vulcan nor Human. To be apart, torn, within one's own family despite the caring of that family is... very lonely. And yet, here I have found a family in which I am accepted as just that - one of the family. I have found love - with you, my brother; with the little, necessary frictions of family life provided, of course, by the good Doctor. Do not lose sight of the family you have here - a family who loves you very dearly, Jim." The Vulcan's voice faltered on the last few words, and the thin face flushed a deep green.

Kirk was aware of profound gratitude as he realised how the Vulcan has suppressed the demands of his nature, his upbringing, to open his heart so in an effort to help.

"Spock! Spock, my friend... my brother." He gripped the muscular forearms. "Stay with me always, please. I need you, your presence at my shoulder, in my mind... in my heart, Spock." He hugged the Vulcan close. "Yes - you are my family, Spock."

"And you are mine, Jim."

They held each other for a long minute, then the intercom cut harshly through the tranquil silence.

"Captain Kirk to the bridge."

Kirk drew back at that, and grinned. "This family sure is a handful, though, wouldn't you say?"

Spock raised an eyebrow, drinking in the warmth of that smile. "I hardly think that over four hundred persons could be described as a mere handful, Jim," he objected innocently, enjoying his Captain's heartfelt groan as he followed him to the bridge to deal with the latest 'family crisis'.



Contrasting Cousins

Janice Pitkethley

Sarek and Amanda waited at the spaceport for the arriving shuttle. A sense of dread overwhelmed Amanda as she watched the shuttle come in to land; aboard were Spock's cousins, seven-year-old Dave and five-year-old Gary - the 'terrible twosome'.

For weeks the boys had pestered their parents to allow them to go to Vulcan; finally, permission was given, and the boys put in charge of a representative of the shipping company, who would look after them until they arrived at their destination.

"Hi, Aunt Amanda!" Dave yelled, pushing to get through the crowd of passengers.

It seemed as if everyone at the spaceport turned to look at them as Dave and Gary ran shrieking into Amanda's arms.

"Where's Spock? Oh, hi, coz!" Dave punched Spock, who had appeared from behind Sarek. "It is not here!" he added, looking around at the staid and serious-faced Vulcans. Everyone had the same expression, even the children. So far, the only Vulcans the boys had seen were Spock and Sarek.

They looked out of the aircar window with great interest; the alien landscape fascinated them and they bombarded Sarek and Amanda with questions.

The aircar slowed and stopped. Dave and Gary jumped out as soon as it had touched down. They stood there, shielding their eyes from the blinding glare of the sun.

Two boys passed on the other side of the walkway; they looked at the parked aircar and then at Dave and Gary.

"Hi, there!" Gary smiled and waved to them. The boys stared for a moment then went on their way.

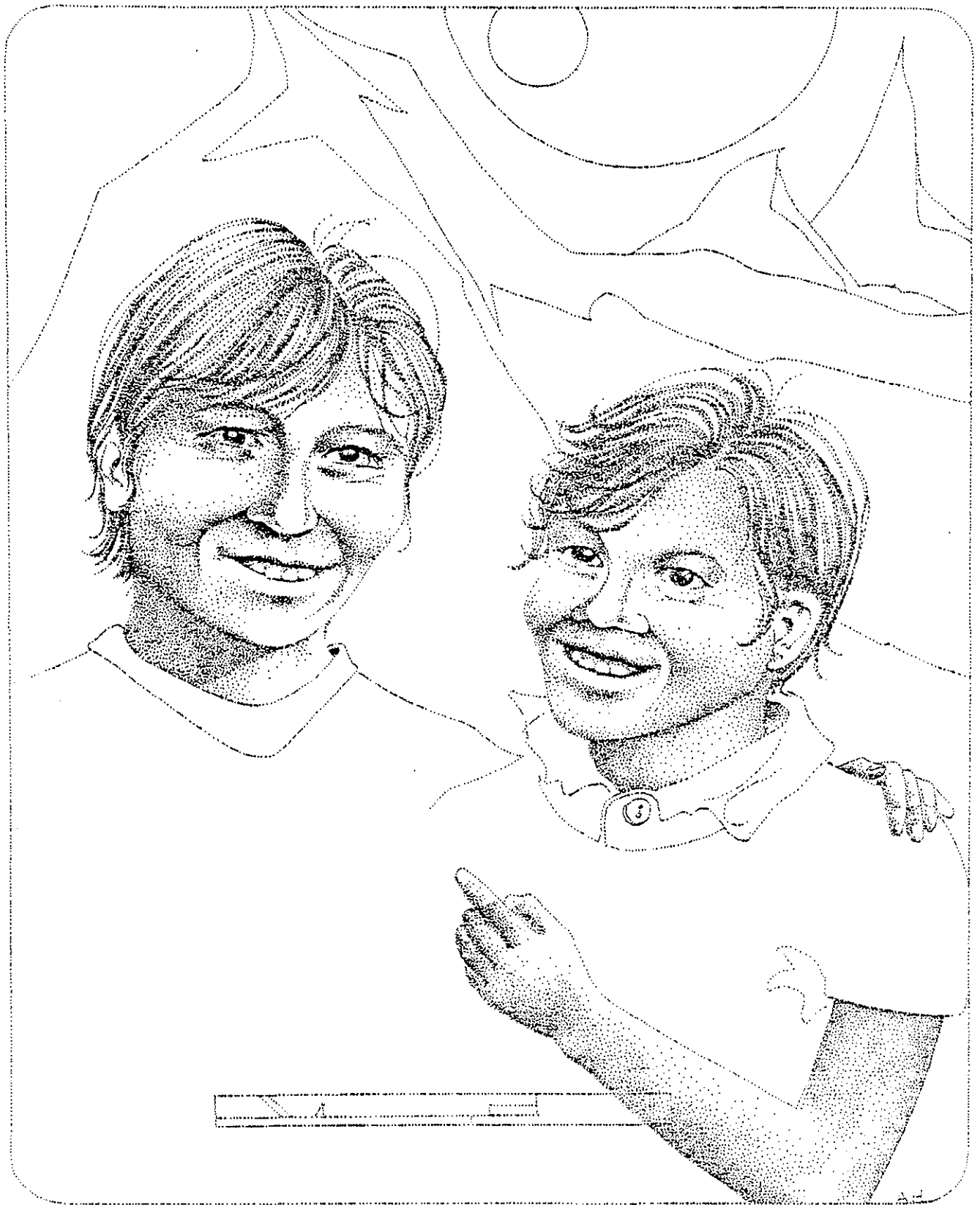
"Don't do that," Amanda warned gently. "Vulcans are not like you."

"They didn't look very friendly." Dave seemed disappointed.

"Come inside." Amanda ushered them into the house. Both boys were fair-haired and blue-eyed, and already their skin was turning a dull red from the sun.

This did not hold them back in any way. They raced through the house from room to room, looking at all the strange fittings and furnishings. Sarek raised one eyebrow and looked up at the ceiling; the boys sounded like a herd of stampeding elephants as they dashed from one room to another; the swish of opening and closing doors was clearly audible.

"What are they doing, Mother?" asked Spock.



"Exploring, no doubt." Amanda picked up the baggage and climbed the stairs, Spock following her.

Two cheeky face peered round one of the doors at the sound of Amanda's footsteps.

"It sure is different here." Dave emerged. "We were just having a look around."

"Yes, we heard." Amanda smiled. She showed them to their room, where they bounced up and down on the beds and peered into cabinets as she unpacked their luggage.

"Where's your room?" Gary asked Spock, who was silently watching all that they were doing.

"Can we see it?" Dave asked.

Spock led them across the hallway. "This is my room."

Dave and Gary looked around. It was similar to their own, simply furnished, and they noticed a distinct lack of the personal things a boy usually collected. Not one toy, or anything remotely resembling one, could be seen; compared to this, their own room at home was a junkyard! The only recreational items in sight were a weird-looking type of musical instrument and some artist's materials. Spock's room faced towards the back of the house; far in the distance, the black mountains of the Forge could be seen.

"Come on, boys." Amanda shepherded them out of the room just as Dave reached for the set of paints. Spock did not like his personal belongings being tampered with.

"I think you should change before dinner," Amanda suggested - she had advised her sister on what type of clothing to pack for the boys, and noticed that she had heeded the advice. All their clothes were of the thinnest cotton.

She adjusted the shower controls, warning them not to touch anything. Both boys felt refreshed after they had changed out of their sticky travelling clothes. They wanted to go out after dinner, but Amanda forbade them, saying that it was still too hot and they would have to get acclimatised slowly. They asked Spock to show them the rest of the house.

"What's in there? You've shown us everything else?" Dave pointed to a doorway.

"We cannot enter. That is my father's study, and we must not disturb him." Spock led them away from the study and down a steep flight of stairs to the cellar.

Here Amanda had converted the original storeroom into a small studio - she loved to paint, and it was a refuge if she felt like being alone for a while. They looked at all the canvases stacked against the wall. Sometimes Amanda painted from memory, especially large landscapes, no doubt when she felt homesick. Dave and Gary knew they dared not touch anything here, either. They went over to look at the half-finished landscape of some part of Vulcan, all reds and orange. Dusk was almost falling when they completed the tour of the house. Not one single room had been overlooked. Dave and Gary stared longingly out at the soft twilight; Amanda noticed this, and gave them permission to go out.

They raced out of the house, yelling with excitement. The laughter soon stopped as they found themselves struggling to breathe in the thin

atmosphere - also it was still very hot, although the sun had gone down.

Spock introduced them to I-Chaya the sehlat both boys and sehlat, a bit suspicious of each other at first, but they soon made friends, I-Chaya allowing Dave and Gary to sit on his back.

"Can we go out?" Gary asked, climbing down again and eyeing the gateway to the street.

"Yes." Spock led the way.

I-Chaya obviously wanted to come too; he followed them out of the enclosed grounds, something he did not normally do. Dave and Gary questioned everything they saw on the walk, chattering excitedly. The visitors turned a corner and came face to face with a crowd of boys, Spock's schoolmates.

They just stood there looking at each other, the dark-haired Vulcan boys taking in the differences of the two blond Humans. Then they noticed Spock.

"Earther!" The taunts began. "He even brings others here! Who are you, strangers?"

"We are Spock's cousins. I'm Dave and this is Gary." Dave faced up to the biggest Vulcan boy.

"Terran! Look at the emotional creature. He is smiling!" The boys stared at Gary, who stood there with a big grin on his face.

"He shows emotion too!" One of them pointed to Spock.

"... they all have Human blood in them... "

"... barbarians... "

By now Dave could take no more. He dashed forward and struck his tormentor, pushing him to the ground. In no time at all, a full-scale battle was in progress. Dave and Gary were no match for the superior strength of the Vulcan boys, but they gave almost as good as they got. But they and Spock were outnumbered by the older boys.

Growling savagely, I-Chaya rushed in to put an end to the hostilities. The older boys scattered.

"Are you all right?" Spock asked, brushing the dust from his clothes.

"We're okay, coz! They didn't know Gary and I have been going to martial arts for a year now!" Dave looked at Spock.

"See how I socked him one?" Gary boasted.

"What are... martial arts?"

The boys explained while walking home. Spock listened to all they said, then thought that 'martial arts' was just another name for the Vulcan art of combat called 'shi-shon'. He did not tell his cousins of this, as he knew the subject was forbidden to a Vulcan of his age. Some of the older boys in school had told him about it, but he dared not let Sarek know of the knowledge he possessed.

"Do not speak of this incident," he warned them before entering the house. "My parents would be most displeased."

"We won't mention a thing. Hold on and try to keep that big mouth of yours shut, Gary..."

That night Spock lay on his bed, his thoughts drifting idly as he prepared for sleep. The feeling of drowsiness vanished instantly as his sharp hearing caught the sound of footsteps in the hallway. His door swished open and a voice whispered, "Spock, are you asleep?"

"No, you may enter if you wish. What is it?"

"We just wanted to talk to you." Dave and Gary climbed up and sat on the bed. "Those boys tonight... they said some pretty mean things to you..."

"It has always been that way," Spock said with a faint catch in his voice. "They know I have a Human mother, and call me 'Earther', 'half-breed', and other insults. I ignore them. Their illogical taunts have ceased to trouble my conscience now."

Gary looked out of the window at the bright points of light in the sky. Three stars were so bright they were almost too dazzling to look at, their light casting some illumination into Spock's room. The cousins could see each other's features.

"Do you know their names?" Dave pointed at the twinkling lights. "We haven't any stars as bright as that."

"It is the constellation Humans call Orion. According to legend, those three stars form Orion's belt."

"What's that you're wearing?" Gary pulled at the thin covering.

"It is called a sha-leeshar - a sleeping robe."

"It looks cooler than what I have on." Dave indicated his shorts.

Gary gave a loud yawn.

Softly, her footsteps making no sound, Amanda walked along the hallway and peeped into the boys' room, making sure that all was well. *What the...* she thought as she saw the room was empty. Then she heard faint voices coming from Spock's room; she looked in to see all three sitting on the bed.

"What's this? A midnight conference?" Amanda smiled.

"We couldn't sleep, Aunt Amanda. It's too hot," Dave explained.

"I know." Amanda thought back to her own arrival on Vulcan. It had taken a long time for her to adapt to the climate. "Try these..." She brought out some spare sleeping robes. "Spock and you are about the same size. Gary is a little smaller, but that will not matter. There now - you look like a couple of little Vulcans!"

Dave and Gary noticed the difference immediately. The garments were cool and lightweight, fastened at the sides by tapes.

"I feel a lot better now." Dave yawned.

"Come - it is late, and you are tired. You should be able to sleep now." Amanda led the boys through to their own room.

Dazzling sunlight poured into the room when Dave and Gary opened their eyes. They did not even remember falling asleep.

Spock was sitting at the kitchen table when they went downstairs. He looked up as they entered. "You have slept long."

"Can we go out?" Dave asked when they had finished breakfast.

"Yes, but I will make sure you are dressed properly," Amanda told them.

She insisted that they wore a long-sleeved shirt and a head covering. Gary started laughing and said they would look strange to any Vulcans who had never seen baseball caps or heard of the Minnesota Meteors! Amanda said she doubted if they would bother. The boys objected to all the 'fussing' at first, then listened seriously as Amanda explained to them that the strong sun could make them very ill. They realised the truth of this statement when they went outside - the sun blazed down from the cloudless sky, the heat burning through the soled leather of their shoes.

"Where do you wish to go?" Spock asked, looking so cool in his Vulcan clothes that the boys envied him.

"Take us to the place we passed on the way back from the spaceport. It had bare sand and no buildings or anything."

"You mean the Forge?" Spock understood what Dave was trying to describe.

"That's it!"

"We can only go to the edge of the Forge. It is a dangerous part of Vulcan."

The boys followed Spock through the streets of Shikhar, making comments on everything they saw on the way. The streets began to thin out as they came closer to the city's edge. Gary laughed at the tingling sensation on his skin as the scanners brushed over him.

They stood on the edge of the Sas-a-Shar, Dave and Gary silent for once as they stared in awe at the vast barren sands broken at intervals by clumps of sparse vegetation.

"I have never seen anything that looks like this place..." Dave said, clicking his camera. "Wait till I take the photos to school when we get back!"

He took some photos of Spock with the L-langdon Mountains in the background, then showed his cousin how to operate the camera. Spock did what they told him, and took photos of Dave and Gary where they wanted them.

They travelled on for a short distance, Dave and Gary stopping to examine everything which caught their attention. Both boys filled their pockets with the glittering marcasite-like fragments of stone which mixed with the red sands.

The sun climbed higher in the sky. The boys began to wilt from the

heat. Their faces grew redder and redder, damp patches appearing on their shirts.

"I'm so hot." Dave wiped his perspiring face.

"I'm thirsty... " Gary complained.

"We will return home. Come." Spock led them back towards ShiKahr.

The streets offered some welcome shade as they walked towards home. Dave and Gary were exhausted by then. The coolness of the house was a welcome relief after the blazing heat. They changed their clothes, then Amanda directed them towards the kitchen and opened one of the compartments of the massive freezer.

"Help yourselves, boys." She indicated the tall jugs of fruit juice. "Drink all you can - you have to in this climate."

Dave and Gary sat on the cool flooring with their glasses of juice, amusing themselves with the reader tapes and laughing at the ones in the Vulcan language.

"Look at this - " Gary indicated the selection. "Mathematics, physics, science, computers... yuk! We couldn't understand any of this lot even if it was in English!"

Tiring of the uninteresting tapes, the boys began a wrestling match. Spock watched, unable to understand as they rolled over and over, bumping into furniture and shrieking with laughter.

"C'mon, Gary, get him... " Dave pulled Spock to the floor and Gary tried to imprison his arms.

"Stop these illogical actions. I do not know the purpose of what you are doing... "

"We have got to keep you down," Dave laughed, sitting on Spock.

"What is going on here?"

All three looked round to see Sarek standing at the entrance to the open doorway.

"I... uh... we were wrestling," Gary stammered.

"Indeed? What is 'wrestling'?" Sarek raised one eyebrow.

"A sport on Earth. We were demonstrating... "

"Totally illogical." Sarek turned and left.

Both Dave and Gary were somewhat in awe of the tall stern Vulcan. They did not know how to address him. Somehow, 'Uncle Sarek' did not sound quite right, and the boys could never have pronounced the Vulcan family name in a million years! They did not call Sarek anything when speaking to him, which seemed the best solution.

After a few days, however, they began to get bored. There were no real places of interest to visit on Vulcan, and they found the way of life so much in contrast to what they were used to. Also they were confined to the house during the greatest heat of the day, only being allowed out in the mornings and early evenings.

Boredom led them into mischief. They drove Amanda to distraction, wondering what they would get up to next. Already they had managed to flood the upper hallway by leaving a tap turned on full. Sarek switched on the tape one night to hear a voice telling a rather rude joke... Then Gary ate some fruit from a tree in the garden and had to be rushed to the nearest doctor for emergency treatment...

Spock, too, found his life disrupted by Dave and Gary's presence in the house. They gave him no peace, always following him around, asking endless questions and teasing him unmercifully. They invaded his room and everywhere else when they felt like it. Privacy was now a thing of the past.

They went too far the day they hid in a cupboard and jumped out, yelling like maniacs... only to be confronted by Sarek instead of Spock! Sarek was most displeased...

"Explain your illogical actions," he ordered.

"We... er... wanted to play a joke on Spock..."

"Do you conduct yourselves in this manner at home?" Sarek demanded.

"... No..."

"Then you will not do it here." Sarek's voice was stern.

"I wouldn't like *him* for a father," Dave confided to Gary when Sarek was out of hearing distance.

"Yeah, but did you see his eyes? If he hadn't been Vulcan I'm sure he would have jumped a mile when we jumped out of that cupboard."

"I've always wondered about Vulcans..." Both boys dissolved into laughter.

Sarek sent for them that night. Dave and Gary thought he was going to give them another stern lecture about their conduct; instead, he informed them that they would attend school with Spock next day.

"School? But... we're on vacation here," Dave protested.

"You will find it interesting." Sarek dismissed them.

So the next morning, they set off with Spock. He did not like the idea very much - his schoolmates would taunt him even more after seeing Dave and Gary.

"It looks big," Gary remarked as they approached the vast complex of buildings.

"This is my school. Please, try to control your emotions while you are here." Spock's eyes looked almost pleading.

"We'll try." Dave guessed the reason and smiled one last time as they entered the school grounds.

The rest of the children stared at the two strangers and then at Spock. "Earthers," one taller boy said as they passed.

"They are of *his* family..."

"... illogical barbarians..."

Dave and Gary found it hard to keep their anger from showing at the taunts of the older boys.

"How do you stand it?" Dave whispered as they entered the classroom.

All eyes turned upon them as the children stared at the newcomers. Even the class instructor raised an eyebrow when he saw the two Human boys.

"My cousins from Earth. They are called Dave and Gary." Spock introduced them to the instructor.

"Welcome." The tall Vulcan gave the hand greeting to the boys. "I trust you will benefit from your visit to a Vulcan school."

Dave and Gary took their places beside Spock and listened with interest as the instructor began the lesson.

As time progressed, however, the visitors found that they could not understand any of the subjects. At seven years old, the Vulcan children were more advanced than the seniors at a high school on Earth. Dave and Gary felt lost and bewildered.

During one of the breaks, Spock took them on a tour of the school, showing them all the different departments. They marvelled at the science labs with their superior and sophisticated equipment, the likes of which they had never seen before. Most of the school was similar to their own, but there was one noticeable exception. The Vulcan school lacked a gymnasium and facilities for physical training.

They questioned Spock about it and he looked at them as if reluctant to answer. "It is... the duty of a Vulcan father to give instructions in these matters," he said at last. "I have not received instruction from Sarek as I am still too young."

"But... You should see the gymnasium and swimming-pools at our school... "

"Do not question me! I do not know the answers!" Spock's voice told Dave and Gary not to question him further.

Instead of continuing the lesson, the instructor asked the two Human boys to tell them about their own school at home. The Vulcan children left their work and listened intently, interrupting every now and then to ask questions.

"What is your opinion of a Vulcan school?" the instructor asked when they had finished.

"We couldn't understand any of your lessons," Dave admitted.

"That is to be expected. Our methods of education are far removed from yours. Continue, class." The instructor left the room.

As soon as he had gone, the comments began...

"They are ignorant savages... "

"... unable to understand any of our subjects... "

"... can you read, little barbarians?"

"Of course we can!" Dave defended himself and Gary.

"Prove it!" One of the boys fed a tape into the computer.

Dave and Gary looked at the screen in dismay. The script was in Vulcan.

"We can't read *that* - it's in *your* language - "

"They admit it. They cannot read!" The boy announced to the rest of the class.

Dave had his revenge, though. One of his best subjects at school was languages, and he launched into a spate of words from each one he knew, switching from one to another. The Vulcans just stared at him...

"What are you saying?" his tormentor asked.

"Verstehen Sie nicht?" Dave could not help a big grin appearing on his face. "You can't understand our Earth languages either!"

"Barbarian! Each nation having its own language?" The boy said with a sneer.

"All you think about is logic!" Gary exploded into anger. "We'll be glad to get back home away from all your straight faces!"

"It will be great to see a happy, *smiling* person again," Dave sighed.

The afternoon session was even worse. Dave and Gary grew bored and restless at the subjects which they could not understand and were far beyond their comprehension. Gary couldn't sit still any longer, and Dave tried hard to keep himself from yawning. Spock looked at them as they began to whisper together. He did not know what had been discussed between them, but it must have been something illogical as Dave's shoulders began to heave with silent laughter.

Gary caught Spock's eye and whispered something into one pointed ear. Spock's eyebrows began to climb towards his hairline. "Indeed? It is not permitted."

"Hey, come on - we're visitors." Gary spoke out loud. Heads turned and the instructor came towards them.

"Do you wish to ask a question?"

"We... er... " Dave stammered, his face turning red.

The whole class turned their attention on the boys as Dave stared at the tall stern Vulcan. The words would not come...

Finally, Spock came to the rescue, speaking in rapid Vulcan to the instructor.

"Your request is most unusual," he said when Spock had finished. "I will honour it as your cousins are not Vulcan. You may leave."

All eyes followed their progress towards the door.

"If they weren't Vulcan they'd be laughing at us!" Dave said as Spock led them through the maze of corridors.

"Where are you taking us? It seems a long way out," Gary demanded.

"I am instructed to guide you as requested." Spock looked faintly

puzzled.

"Hey, wait a moment - we're going home!"

"There seems to have been some misunderstanding - "

"There sure has!" Dave said with a huge smile on his face. "What did you say to the teacher?"

Both boys gave way to the laughter and emotions bubbling up inside them, their laughter echoing through the silent corridors. Several doors opened and class instructors appeared to see what all the noise was about.

"Control your emotions!"

Spock then had to explain to the instructors that his cousins were from Earth before they were allowed to continue on their way.

"Let's get out of here... Which way do we go?" Gary looked around.

"But... the instructor... "

"Can go and chase himself!" Dave finished for Spock. "You can apologise to him. We are going home."

"I must return."

"Then we'll go home ourselves. C'mon, Gary."

Fortunately the distance was short. Amanda questioned them in surprise when they arrived home alone. "Where is Spock?"

"He's still at school, Aunt Amanda. We got bored with their lessons and came home," Dave explained.

"I thought you wouldn't like it there. It's different from your school."

"They were too far ahead for us."

"I expect Spock has some explaining to do regarding your sudden disappearance." Amanda smiled.

Amanda told Sarek that the school visit was not a success. He nodded silently, already seeing the boys' disruptive behaviour in his mind.

The remaining days of the holiday seemed to drag past. Both Dave and Gary began to show signs of homesickness; Vulcan was no place for two small mischievous boys.

At last the day of departure arrived. Dave and Gary stood waiting at the spaceport for the shuttle which would connect with the Earth ship. Dave looked up at the destination board. Earth... how good that sounded!

Spock, too, was glad to see the shuttle launch itself from the runway. Peace at last!

The boys took one last look at the red sands of Vulcan as the shuttle gained height. "Quite a place," Dave remarked.

"Yeah, but I'm glad we don't live there. It's great to be going home."

Up ahead, the passenger ship waited for the arrival of the shuttle.
As Dave and Gary boarded, the first thing they saw was the smiling face
of a stewardess. They felt as if they were stepping onto a piece of Earth
itself...



Journey to Understanding

Karen Hayden

You continued to deny
That you could give us command
To save your father;
But you would have done anything
To save him.

I saw it in your eyes
As you told me your reasons
For retaining command of his ship.
I saw the pain in your very stance:
The way you closed your eyes against my presence,
and what I said.

He who meant so much more to you
Than we did, was injured.
His life had been threatened
And I could see that yours had been, too.
There is a thread that binds you both, soul to soul.

I regret that... physical violence... which I presumed
Upon you - and your heritage.
It was my only way of showing you
How much I hurt inside -
To learn that he came before us, your own parents.

Kirk did get well.
Your mission was a success.
And life carried on as before -
Except for one thing.
I knew our lives would never be quite the same again.

Afterwards, with Sarek well again,
I understood. And accepted. And gave thanks
That you had finally found someone, your other half,
To make your life worthwhile.
You had found a home at last.

But what is this thing called Fate
That it could teach me such a lesson
That I should have learned on my own
As soon as we came aboard,
And saw you and he together...



CHANGE OF OUTLOOK

Vicki Richards

"He's sitting there again, Doctor - he really shouldn't be. Shall I go and make him get back into bed?"

The colony doctor looked through the transparent partition from his office into the ward; as Mason had said, the man had returned to sit at the side of his unconscious colleague's bed. The doctor sighed resignedly.

"No, Mason. There's no point. Let him stay there until he gets too tired - then make him get back into bed. With enforced use of a tranquilliser if necessary."

The doctor returned to his work; the experiments he had been working on had gone completely wrong again. Soon the whole colony would be affected and there was, seemingly, nothing he could do about it. And how he had the two strangers to worry about, too. His gaze was drawn from the papers in front of him back to the partition. Still the Human sat there, watching over the other. With a sigh and a shake of his head, the doctor once again bent to his work.

Mason walked quietly through the subdued lighting of the night-time ward. With a silent tread, she approached the watcher. He didn't seem to have heard her coming; at least he gave no sign - but she suspected that he had.

He looked tired; not surprisingly, considering the shaking up he must have had during the shuttle crash. He wasn't really badly injured - only cuts and bruises and two cracked ribs; but he needed rest. And that was something he wasn't getting while he persisted in sitting up by the bedside of his unconscious companion.

She looked at him closely for a moment; she had never actually met a Starship Captain before. They were a breed apart, if all that was said about them was to be believed. He seemed too young for such a responsibility; yet in a way he had a wisdom that many never acquired with age at all. And look at the way he had half-carried his injured officer across the desert; that was some feat, and the colony was still talking about it. It wasn't often anything out of the ordinary happened on New Terra, after all.

Then he turned his head and gave her a wan smile; as if he fully expected her to have come in an attempt - another attempt - to make him return to his own bed, and he didn't really have the energy for the fight he would put up anyway. Unaccountably, she found herself smiling back; it was impossible to dislike him, even if he was one of the awkwardest patients she'd ever come across.

"It's okay, Captain Kirk," she told him quietly. "Dr. Edwards has said you can stay here, as long as you don't disturb your friend. When you get really tired - and I don't think that'll be long, mind - then I'm to make you go back to bed. Do you understand?"

"Perfectly, Nurse." He smiled again. "And thank you. Don't worry -

when the time comes, I'll come quietly. Anyway, it wouldn't be the first time I've been taken unawares by a hypo. You know - it's surprising how much you remind me of my head nurse."

Vaguely aware that he'd paid her some kind of backhanded compliment, Mason went off to make her rounds, and left him to his vigil. But as she made her way round the ward, she couldn't help but see his fair head bent tiredly forward as he sat there. He was different, she decided; different from any of the colonists. She'd rarely seen such devotion to a friend; the unconscious alien *had* to mean more to him than just another officer.

Being a good judge of character was one attribute which helped to make her a good nurse - or so she hoped - and she was positive she was right about that; no matter what Dr. Edwards had said when she'd commented on it. Normally she never disagreed with his opinions - he was a brilliant doctor, after all - but this time she thought he was wrong. Surely the way the Starship Captain had put his own life at risk to help the other meant something.

A wry smile crossed Kirk's face as he watched her go. They were good people here, all right. The medical facilities might not be up to much, but the good intentions were there; and at least the technology was enough to cope with his own injuries.

But it wasn't his own few scratches that concerned him. He turned again to resume his vigil over the unconscious Vulcan.

Damn that shuttlecraft! If only they hadn't been forced to use a hired craft. When they got back to the Enterprise, he was going to make things pretty hot for a commercial company that apparently couldn't maintain its shuttlecraft in a proper condition! Of course, Spock had discovered the faulty navigational giro in short order; but by that time they'd been out in space and hadn't been able to turn back. The preflight computer checks hadn't shown it up; another item to 'mention' to the authorities.

Actually, Kirk was furious at such incompetence. Normally such a fault wouldn't have been so dangerous to them; not with his companion's scientific skills to aid them. But there had been a distinct lack of spare parts on board - and then they'd hit the magnetic storm. He supposed they'd really been lucky. Lucky to have survived that storm... and incredibly lucky that the crash landing on New Terra hadn't killed them both.

He remembered the terrible moment of panic he'd experienced when he'd come round to find Spock still deeply unconscious. The incredible Vulcan strength had been no defence this time; not against a snapped safety restraint and a violent throw against a bulkhead.

If only Bones were here - head injuries to a Vulcan were completely beyond the colony Doctor's experience - and the unnatural pallor on Spock's features was quite frightening.

Still, he had convinced himself that Spock had now entered a deep healing trance - perhaps luck was going to be with them once again - and certainly his life signs were stable; as stable as they'd been before when his Vulcan friend had been in that condition. One reason why he had to sit here and watch over Spock. The healing trance had baffled Dr. Edwards completely; and although he'd given him strict instructions on all he knew of the healing trance, he was *not* going to trust anyone here to do the right things at the critical moment when Spock began to return to consciousness.

His eyes returned to the green bruising on the Vulcan's forehead, and he winced inwardly. *Damn* that shuttlecraft! And damn the orders that had forced their premature return from shore leave; if Starfleet hadn't recalled them to the Enterprise at such short notice, they wouldn't have had to hire that heap of junk. But the emergency mission to the Ophichius system did mean the Enterprise would now be in the area, and Scotty would be searching for them. Knowing his engineer's capabilities, it would surely not be long before they were located and picked up.

He just wished it could be soon. McCoy was needed here, badly. For Spock's sake he ought to be here *now*. Kirk tried not to think of the fact that if Scotty couldn't find them soon enough, he'd be forced to take the ship off on that emergency mission without them.

Instinct told him that the nurse and the doctor were discussing him again; he could sense their eyes on him from the window of the Doctor's office. Well, let them discuss him. No matter how diplomatic he might have been with the nurse, he had *no* intention of returning to his own bed until Spock was safely out of the trance. And they had no chance of catching him unawares with a tranquilliser shot either; long association with McCoy had taught him well how to defend against the wiles of the medical profession. No matter what he might have told the nurse to keep her happy, there was no way he was going to move until he knew Spock was out of danger.

Unless he passed out, of course.

"Don't think that because Captain Kirk appears to be a reasonable man, the stories you have heard of Earth and the Federation are not true," Dr. Edwards said to Mason practically as soon as she had returned to his small, cluttered office - without even lifting his head from the task occupying him.

"Doctor?" she said as politely as possible. He had always had her respect; he had earned everyone's respect with the work he did - but she really didn't feel like a lecture at that moment. She wasn't a child any more, and it was about time everyone on New Terra stopped treating her as one.

Then he did look at her. With an expression that clearly said he did regard himself as knowing more about it than she, he explained, "Nurse Mason - I know you have always had a certain curiosity to know what life outside New Terra is really like. Almost everyone born and brought up here has - and I don't suppose you're any different. But believe me - everything you've heard is true. There are wars, unrest - progress without any real thought for preservation of the past. And the Federation, despite all its high-sounding ideals, is in the thick of it, always discovering and colonising new worlds; always expanding. They do not believe in the things we believe in here."

She badly wanted to tell him how much she disagreed; to say for how long she had felt the New Terran philosophy of hiding your head in the sand, isolating yourself from the rest of the galaxy and clinging to the past was one big mistake. To tell him how she didn't believe half the things the founders of the colony had said about the Federation; and Earth, and other Humans in particular. The Klingons and the Romulans were the warmongers in the galaxy, not the Federation. She'd seen the literature her childhood friend Cathryn had begged from the pilot of that cargo ship that had called a few months ago. How she longed to tell him that all her life she'd doubted the things everyone tried to make her believe about the peoples and other worlds she so wanted to see.

But she didn't. Instead, she merely went through to the lab and brought through the results of the latest batch of tests, and handed them to him.

"Perhaps you're right, Doctor," she said pleasantly, though she didn't feel in the least like being diplomatic. But he does seem a kind person - and I do hope his officer will recover."

Edwards was about to start telling her of the kind of ruthlessness a man in that position would have to have. Mason was a good nurse, and he was beginning to get a bit worried over the ideas she seemed to be developing. There was too much of this questioning New Terran philosophy amongst the young, and he had a good idea the Elders were soon going to clamp down on it. He wouldn't like to see Mason's career damaged. Of course their beliefs required that they help the injured Outsiders to the best of their ability, even though one of their basic tenets was to avoid all but the most necessary contact with Outside contamination. He disliked almost as much as the Elders the prospect of the Starship calling to pick up the two men; but then, the sooner they were gone, the better.

Then he looked at the latest test results the nurse had just handed him. Negative again. Useless. Whatever the unidentified disease was, it had already killed ten New Terrans and looked set to kill a lot more unless a cure was found; and the chances of that were becoming more remote with each failed experiment.

He raised his head and looked through the windows to where the Federation man sat silently watching the other. Whether his strange behaviour actually did indicate that he felt some kind of friendship for the alien or not - and Edwards had to admit privately that he'd never known Mason to be wrong about people yet, no matter what his personal views were - it wasn't likely to make any difference, the way things were going.

If the unidentified sickness carried on growing in virulence the way it was doing, they'd all be dead before the Starship came anyway. Or well on the way to it. He might not have found an antidote, but he *could* calculate. Edwards estimated another seventy-two hours before almost all the colony began to experience the first symptoms.

It seemed like he'd been sitting there for hours - barely hanging onto consciousness himself, as his wounds and fatigue combined threatened increasingly to send him to sleep against his will. Time and again he almost dropped off, and was kept awake only by the thought of what could well happen to Spock if he wasn't there to help him at the crucial moment.

That nurse and the doctor were still watching him from the office, he knew. He only hoped that if he *did* fall asleep, they'd make enough noise when they came to wake him up before they had a chance to make sure he went back to his own bed and to sleep.

Eventually he must have closed his eyes, for it was with quite a jolt that he came fully awake again, disorientated for a moment as he found himself still sitting there at the edge of the Vulcan's bed.

Something must surely have caused him to start like that. He looked at his friend's still pallid face anxiously. Then Spock groaned again - an almost inaudible, and certainly uncharacteristic, noise. But it let Kirk know what he'd been waiting all those long hours to hear, and the life-sign readings confirmed it. Spock was beginning to come round.

The colony's equipment might be far less advanced than that in the Enterprise's sickbay, but it was certainly advanced enough to let the office's occupants know that their patient was beginning to come round. Edwards might never have seen an unconscious Vulcan before - or even a Vulcan at all, for that matter - and he might know next to nothing about the healing trance, but if he didn't know exactly what was happening, he knew that *something* was, and within a few seconds Kirk found Mason and Edwards both at his shoulder, both watching. He hoped they weren't going to be a hindrance, despite what he'd told them. He'd have to tell them again. He couldn't afford to risk their trying to restrain him now. Then Spock groaned quietly again.

"When he starts to come round, I'll have to strike him," he said in the command tone without turning round. "When a Vulcan emerges from a healing trance, he needs the pain to help him concentrate. If he does not receive that stimulation, he will be unable to waken. Then he'll sink deeper within himself until he's impossible to rouse, and will die. I'll have to hit him, and you must *not* attempt to stop me. Do you understand?"

"I freely admit I know little of alien physiology, Captain," Edwards replied tonelessly, "but although I do not approve of the Federation, my oath as a doctor ensures that I do the best I can for every patient; which in this case means leaving things to you. I will not interfere."

Kirk was relieved. He turned to look at Edwards. "Thank you," he said. Then Spock began to stir, and his whole attention was focused on the critical moments of Spock's emergence from the deep trance.

Thank God it wasn't the first time he'd had to do this for Spock. Thank God he knew what to do! The very first time they'd had any experience of the healing trance - that time when he'd been struck down on Tyree's planet - despite M'Benga's knowledge, it had almost all gone wrong when Christine Chapel hadn't been told properly what to do... and Scotty hadn't helped, either, with his well-intentioned but almost fatal interference. If M'Benga hadn't been on hand... He shuddered inwardly. He could still remember how he'd felt on returning to the ship from Neural and had been told of the incident. The terrible knowledge that Spock could have died, and there wouldn't have been anything he could have done.

But this time he was here to help. And Neural was a long time ago. Spock had been forced to enter the trance more than once since then, and he'd made damn' sure that either he or Bones were the ones on hand. But it was always critical, and frightening to a non-Vulcan.

Spock's movements became stronger - the time was approaching. Kirk watched and waited - the two Humans behind him remained silent and motionless.

Then suddenly the Vulcan sat up, wild-eyed and confused-looking. Kirk heard Mason's small gasp and sensed Edwards' start of surprise; but he wasn't concerned with them.

With deliberate determination, he began to strike Spock about the face, hating what he was having to do and flinching inwardly as the Vulcan made a small sound of pain. But he kept on, knowing as he did that Spock needed the pain, would die without it.

Then, just as he thought he couldn't make himself strike his friend one more time, a strong Vulcan hand came up and grabbed his arm.

"That will be sufficient, Captain," Spock said in an even, controlled voice that still sounded very weak. "I shall recover now - thank you."

Kirk found he was suddenly *very* tired; mainly with relief as well as the long-ignored weight of his own injuries; too tired to speak. He just smiled at Spock and gave him a look that said *How dare you frighten me, my friend. I thought I was maybe going to lose you this time.*

Spock seemed to understand, and gave that knowing nod of his. Then the two New Terrans were there, examining the Vulcan with their relatively old-fashioned scanners, oblivious of the fact that it was unusual for a Vulcan to express thanks. They behaved so like McCoy did when his concern for a patient made him ignore everyone and everything else around that Kirk found he wanted to laugh. But he still wished McCoy was here; Spock might be out of danger, but he was still far from recovered. Well, they'd just have to rely on that stubborn Vulcan physiology to mend him.

"From as much sense as I can make of these readings, it looks like your officer *will* recover, Captain Kirk." Edwards stood back, a perplexed frown on his face. "However, I cannot be certain that I understand them correctly."

"He'll be all right, Doctor." Kirk grinned, though he'd still rather have heard McCoy's voice grumbling about 'crazy Vulcan readings'. As long as Spock was going to be okay; and already he looked much stronger.

It appeared that Edwards was about to start on a full-scale examination; however, at that moment a high-pitched alarm sounded. The expression which crossed both Edwards' and Mason's faces was not a happy one.

"Excuse us, Captain - we must leave you and your officer." Edwards sounded grim. "I am afraid I have an epidemic on my hands. I do hope you will not both recover merely in time to contract it."

"I believe the expression is 'out of the frying pan, into the fire'," came Spock's comment, and Kirk stopped watching Mason and Edwards' hasty departure to look at the Vulcan again.

"You really did give me a fright there, Spock." Kirk grinned half-heartedly. He didn't like the sound of what he'd just heard - and not just for the weakened Vulcan's sake. It sounded serious - an epidemic here could be disastrous, if the limited medical facilities he'd already seen were anything to go by.

"I *will* recover, Jim." Spock was concerned about Kirk now - he did not feel completely awake... but his friend's failure to acknowledge his attempt at Human humour was enough to tell him that the Captain thought things were bad.

Spock made an attempt to sit up. "Jim - if this epidemic *is* serious, it is surely our duty to help. New Terra may not be a part of the Federation, but the Prime Directive does not apply here. I must... "

"You must lie down and rest," Kirk interrupted, gently but firmly, pushing him down again. "And that's an order. You were badly injured. Spock - a head injury like that isn't funny. And I'm practically out on my feet. Both of us will be able to help more efficiently when we're a bit stronger - okay? Yield to the logic of the situation, Spock."

Spock's answer was merely the best Affronted Vulcan expression he could manage at that moment. Then he nodded his agreement and settled back to rest, knowing that it was the only thing that would make Kirk himself finally get some sleep.

Spock woke first, punctually after the period he had set himself to sleep for. Carefully he sat up, and was relieved to find that the dizziness he had experienced on his initial attempt was no longer present. Carefully he got out of bed and stood up, noticing for the first time that his Starfleet uniform had been replaced by a utilitarian hospital coverall. The injury he had received in the shuttle crash had indeed been serious; but it could have been far worse, and the healing trance did seem to have done its work. But he knew full well that if Jim hadn't managed to get him to this medical centre, the cold of the New Terran night would undoubtedly have killed him in the state he was in.

He had only been half conscious at irregular intervals during the long journey across the desert - but he could remember how Jim had resolutely kept them both going, typically refusing to leave him. But then he wouldn't have left his friend either, had their positions been reversed.

The march seemed like a long nightmare; indeed, he had been walking in his sleep half the time, and Jim had been forced to carry him on occasion, he knew. How he had managed it with his own injuries, Spock would never know. The Human's determination went practically beyond belief.

Kirk woke up by himself, and sat up as Spock approached. He still didn't look quite himself either - but he looked a great deal improved on the night before.

"How are you, Captain?" Spock noticed the wince as Kirk slowly stood, and went to help him. "Perhaps you should remain in bed."

"Look who's talking!" Kirk retorted. "Not the first time I've had a couple of cracked ribs, Spock. I'll survive. Where's the Doctor?"

Spock shook his head. "Not here. I believe he has not returned since he left us earlier."

"They've got problems of their own - serious ones if I'm right." Kirk looked grim. "Edwards may be anti-Federation and parochial, but his dedication's all it should be. If he didn't come back to check on us, it's because he couldn't."

"I agree. He mentioned an epidemic - the fact that we are the only two patients in this ward could indicate several alternatives." Spock's recent return to consciousness hadn't inhibited his observational capacities in any way; already he was considering possible courses of action.

"Alternatives?" Kirk was definitely concerned for New Terra's problems; but the fact that Spock was behaving exactly like Spock always did made him feel a great deal better. Spock was going to be okay. Unless, of course, as Edwards had said, they contracted the mystery illness.

"Yes," Spock replied. "Either we have been isolated because we are Offworlders and therefore in their eyes cannot be permitted to mix with New Terrans in general - or there simply are no other patients here - a fact we know not to be true. Or else, as is most likely, the other patients are themselves in isolation in an attempt to halt the spread of the epidemic."

"Your assumptions are correct," said a tired voice from the doorway. Edwards had returned, looking as if he had indeed been up all night. He approached the two Starfleet officers. "This hospital has been forced to stop treating ordinary patients, apart from the most serious emergencies.

In which case, the patient admitted has to stay here; the whole hospital is in isolation. You two are here partly to prevent your contracting the virus."

"Surely the fact that you are here means that we are not totally isolated," Spock commented. He had immediately become aware of many things not previously apparent.

Edwards looked at the Vulcan as if he really hadn't expected that kind of perception - or directness. Kirk had to remind himself that Edwards had probably never seen a Vulcan before.

"True," the Doctor replied slowly. He was not used to discussing his patients' cases so thoroughly with them - didn't really agree with it. But he had to concede - grudgingly - that these two did have some kind of right to know. "Mason and I are the only staff here. We volunteered to stay and treat the victims. Our decontamination procedures may not be completely foolproof, I admit. We can only do the best we can."

"Then we may well have been exposed already," Kirk said. It wasn't a question.

"I'm afraid you may be. But when you turned up here as you did - what could we do but treat you?" Edwards didn't seem to feel anything was wrong in the way they'd been brought here when they'd turned up in the small township nearby. Then, Kirk had been too glad of help for Spock to notice anything else. Now he could see that they'd been isolated themselves - because the New Terrans considered them Offworlders and untouchables. Spock's first alternative hadn't been too far off the mark, after all.

"What are the symptoms of the disease, and what methods of cure and containment have you tried so far?" Spock asked, ever the practical scientist. A look of something close to anger flashed across Edwards' face.

"My First Officer isn't suggesting that you haven't done everything you could." Kirk tried to defuse the situation. He'd seen precisely that kind of reaction to Vulcan logic before. "Mr. Spock is actually offering to help - he is the Enterprise's Science Officer as well as her second-in-command, and there have been many occasions when he has worked closely with my Chief Medical Officer."

The New Terran doctor was silent for a moment. Then he looked at them with an expression of... new hope, almost. Desperate hope - was it really as bad as that?

"Do you truly think you *could* help?" Edwards' attitude to Spock had suddenly changed from one of almost disinterest to definite attention.

"I am a Vulcan," came the immediate reply that Kirk had practically expected. "I should not have offered aid had I believed myself unable to give any."

Edwards seemed to accept that. "Your Federation technology - our biocomputers aren't capable of the things yours are..."

"Vulcans are capable of complex mental calculations," Kirk put in before Spock could even open his mouth; the Vulcan's expression was totally unreadable, except to Kirk - who knew that Spock would have been quite amused, had the situation not been as serious as it obviously was.

"We've heard much about Vulcans - but that, I didn't know." The Doctor appeared distracted; almost talking to himself in the confusion he

felt at hope rekindled when he had believed there to be none. "But the Elders - they might not permit it."

"The Elders?"

"Yes - the Elders might say your help constituted interference. Outside contamination is what they fear most. What we *all* fear most," Edwards added, as if to ascertain that his own loyalty to the New Terran ideals was not in doubt.

"But surely in an emergency..." Kirk said, but Edwards was so preoccupied that he didn't seem to hear.

"Wait here - I will have to talk to them. We have a visual communications link. It will not take long." Then he was gone from the ward, leaving the two Starfleet officers behind.

"Spock - I have a nasty feeling about this," Kirk said.

"A... 'feeling', Captain?"

"Come on, Spock. You know damn well how often my hunches have been right. And you've had a few yourself - don't deny it!"

Spock nodded thoughtfully. "I agree. And logic would indicate that any culture so concerned with avoiding outside contact that they would allow medical personnel probably contaminated by an unknown, fatal disease to treat, and therefore possible infect, injured Offworlders, would be unlikely to bend their principles easily."

"You mean they won't want our help," said Kirk grimly. "I told you I had a bad feeling about it. I think you're right." He shrugged resignedly. It looked like he'd have to play the diplomat again - he just hoped it would work.

Two hours later Kirk's foreboding had been proved correct. With barely any explanation, armed guards had entered the ward and taken them off to the sparsely-furnished but reasonably comfortable prison cell they were in now. They hadn't even been allowed to make direct contact with the Elders either to offer aid or to put their own case, and Kirk was beginning to feel extremely depressed about the whole situation. The New Terrans had to be positively paranoid about contamination from the outside galaxy if they'd so compromise their own ideals of social justice and general Human kindness by imprisoning injured Offworlders - and exposing their own security people to the disease - as soon as the unseen Elders had known of their presence in the medical centre. Only the medical emergency had slowed down the passage of that bit of information. Kirk wondered if Edwards was in trouble now.

At least they'd allowed Nurse Mson to visit them: she hadn't been able to say much - Kirk thought she had a good idea the room was bugged. All she'd actually said was how sorry she was that their imprisonment had been considered necessary, and had given them information on the advance of the disease, its symptoms and the number of victims so far. Apparently she was to check on their medical condition periodically; having already been exposed to the virus, she was a natural choice for the job. But Kirk had an idea she'd asked for the job - and that there was a lot more she would have liked to have said if she'd been able to, in safety. Then Mason had left, and Kirk had decided that there was at least one New Terran who might help them if they needed it... and they just might. Before the shuttle crashed, they had managed to get off a message to the Enterprise: she ought

to be here in - Spock had calculated it as at least four days from now, depending on the speed with which her present emergency mission was completed; it was now certain that Scott had had to take the ship to Ophicius without delaying any longer to collect the Captain and First Officer. Assuming that the Enterprise had received the message - the crashed shuttlecraft's automatic distress signal had been another piece of hardware that malfunctioned at a critical time, which meant that Scott would have to search for them with sensors once he reached this area. And the New Terran authorities would no doubt not even wish to talk to a Starship, let alone admit that they were holding two Starfleet officers as prisoners.

Their communicators had been taken away, too. He didn't know, of course, if Mason had any idea of where they had been put, or even if she would co-operate - or if she would be able to. But they needed a communicator. What he *didn't* want was Scotty beaming him up to the ship when the sensors located Spock's Vulcan readings... which he probably would do when he couldn't make contact and realised that they were in trouble. The standard decontamination procedures might work - but then they might not. And he did not want to risk infecting his ship. They just had to get a communicator.

"It is extremely illogical that the New Terrans should refuse our offer of help, considering the seriousness of their situation." Spock's voice brought him out of his thoughts. He'd been silent since Mason's departure.

"From what I've seen so far, I don't think any of them have heard of logic," replied Kirk grimly.

"Perhaps when the disease progresses their desperation may change their minds?" suggested the Vulcan.

"Spock," said Kirk, totally unable to stop himself from smiling at that, "I do believe you're becoming more of an expert on Human nature all the time." Then he became serious again. "But what about this disease? From what Mason's told us, do you think you could identify it?"

"That is uncertain, Captain. The symptoms appear to be a sudden high fever and delirium, followed in almost all the cases by death. The virulence seems extreme - I do not believe their attempts to halt its spread will succeed," Spock told him. "However, I cannot hypothesise further without more data. And Jim - there is always the possibility that even with efficient bio-computers and adequate tests I might still be unable to identify the disease or a cure for it. There may not be enough time left."

"But we still have to try and help, even if any aid we might give proved futile."

"Agreed, Captain - in any case, logic dictates that where choices are limited, one must take the most logical course. We must attempt to help the New Terrans even if we cannot do anything useful."

"That sounds like the kind of logic you employed when the Galileo was destroyed. I've noticed you aren't above the odd Human gamble when the occasion calls for it, my friend." Kirk crossed the room to look out of the small window.

"I believe I said that much at the time," Spock admitted. "And Jim... I know it wasn't logic that prompted you to risk your own life in bringing me across the desert from the shuttle. You should not have risked your own safety for me - but thank you."

"No - not logic," Kirk agreed. "Or maybe again the kind of logic you've used at other times. 'Merely my concern that Starfleet should not lose an efficient officer' was what you said, wasn't it?"

Spock nodded. A far greater admission than he'd once have been able to make. There was no further need for words. He had long since learned that part of friendship was understanding what the other meant. Another lesson his Human Captain had taught him.

"But you'll never know how hard a choice it was to make; risk moving you and keep you from entering the healing trance when I had no real idea as to the seriousness of your injuries - or stay in the wreck of the shuttle and hope it would provide some kind of protection for you against the cold of the New Terran night." Kirk's expression reflected how hard that choice had been.

"I do not believe I would have survived that cold, Jim," Spock said gently. "You made the correct decision."

Now it was Kirk's turn to nod agreement and say no more. Spock was all right - it was enough. But how soon would it be before the disease affected them, too? As a Vulcan, Spock might last out longer - but there was no way of knowing that for certain. Mason had told them Edwards expected the whole colony to be affected within the next two days. If they were going to make a move at all, it would have to be soon. They couldn't just sit here in captivity and wait for all of New Terra to die.

When the colony of New Terra had been founded just over fifty years ago, its founders had declared complete independence from the Federation, and had made it clear that their wish was to live in isolation, following their own philosophy of non-involvement and as much self-sufficiency as possible; in those fifty years, the only outside contact had been with only the most essential cargo vessels. Kirk knew it was clear that their accusations towards the Federation were unfounded; the proof of that was in how the UFF had made no attempt to prevent the New Terrans from living in exactly the way they wanted.

But how to help the stubborn colonists? No matter what Spock said about perhaps not being able to find a cure, Kirk had seen the Vulcan pull off enough apparent miracles in the past to know he had a good chance of succeeding. He knew Spock's scientific capabilities - if there was any answer, Spock would find it, given the chance. But he had first to be given that chance.

"Spock," Kirk said suddenly, "I think you're right. I think they may well change their minds about letting us try to help. Desperation has a way of undermining the most resolute stubbornness."

"What do you intend, Captain?" Spock had seen that look in Kirk's eyes before; it was clear that he had an idea.

"How long do you estimate before the situation becomes critical?"

"It is critical now - but if you mean, how long before their desperation overcomes their fear of us - ?" Kirk nodded in response to what wasn't really a question - "The New Terrans' stubbornness is an incalculable factor," Spock continued thoughtfully, "however, a rough estimate would be, in approximately six hours from now. If they react logically. If they should refuse to reconsider until almost the whole colony is affected - then it may well be too late."

Kirk felt as loath to rely on the New Terrans' extremely suspect logic as Spock did; and he knew how much the Vulcan disliked having to give such

estimates with incomplete data; but knowing Spock, even his rough guesses could generally be trusted. He would know, too, when the epidemic's point of no return would be reached, even with such scanty information...

"We'll wait those six hours, Spock," he said decisively. "Then we'll act."

Six long hours later, the New Terran evening was drawing on. Spock ceased observing the growing darkness through the small cell window and turned to Kirk.

"It is time, Captain. We should make our move now."

"Right, Spock." Kirk was relieved to be able to actually *do* something; the waiting could be more nerve-racking than acting. *Correction*, thought Kirk to himself, *it is more nerve-racking*. "We'll put our plan into motion. Since it doesn't look like the guards have any intention of ever coming in here - and that food dispenser over there means they don't have to - we'll just have to get them in here." Kirk reached out and touched the Vulcan's arm. "I know how much of a strain this is on you, Spock - and you know I hate asking you to do it. If it wasn't necessary..."

"It *is* necessary," Spock said. "I have no objections."

"You're sure they're out there?" Kirk still didn't like having to make the request - he hadn't made it an order. There was the recent head injury to consider - given the choice, he wouldn't risk Spock's health for anything. But they both had their duty to consider - always duty.

"I sense their presence. I will make the attempt."

Spock crossed to the door of the cell and stood just to one side of it. After a few moments preparation, he leaned against the wall, closing his eyes in mental concentration as he sent out his thoughts to make contact with the minds of the guards. Not the first time they'd employed such a tactic; but it wasn't a simple thing to do.

The effort he was making showed in the Vulcan's face, and Kirk again felt strong pangs of guilt for having asked him to do it. Then Spock suddenly stood back from the wall.

"They are coming. I implanted a compulsion to check on us..." Even as Spock was speaking, the door began to open slowly. Both guards came in; they headed into the room to where Kirk stood, grinning as disarmingly as possible. The telepathically-implanted suggestion had made them forget most of their caution; they came just far enough into the cell for Spock to use the neck pinch and render them both unconscious. Taking their weapons, the two Enterprise men made their escape.

A quick search revealed that they were the only prisoners being held there. The building housing the detention quarters was virtually empty - a symptom of New Terra's lack of crime, or of the present emergency? But it worked in their favour - within a few moments they had located what served as a control room of sorts. The one unsuspecting guard quickly became another victim of the Vulcan's silent stealth. The colonists certainly had no experience of dealing with Vulcan prisoners.

"As I've said before - it *is* a shame you can't teach me how to do that," Kirk commented wryly as Spock executed the neck pinch and gently lowered the unconscious guard to the floor. Spock replied with his eyebrow and immediately went to what looked like a relatively outdated

communications console.

"A video communications link, Captain," Spock said as Kirk joined him. Already the Vulcan was pressing the necessary switches. "Simple to operate - although outmoded. All that is required is to locate the correct frequency..."

Even as Spock was talking, the screen cleared and a middle-aged, tired-looking man came into focus. He wore the simple New Terran style of clothing; but his chain of office let Kirk and Spock know that they had reached one of the Elders. Spock altered the focus and the view widened, to show them a picture of the whole chamber. Six Elders sat there. All turned in response to the videolink call system. Six pairs of eyes widened in surprise - and fear - as they took in who was at the other end of the link. Kirk groaned inwardly - fear could be the hardest form of prejudice to overcome.

"They're free - the Federation Outworlders!" one of them began to cry in a stangled voice as he recovered enough to make his tongue work. "The guards - where are the guards?"

Most of the Elders began to get up from their seats - Kirk knew he couldn't let them leave the room. "No - wait! Please," he said into the communications link. "I swear we won't leave here - won't do anything you don't want us to. We just want to help. Please listen!"

Spock watched with little surprise as the Elders halted their flight at Kirk's words. The effect that voice could have was incredible - but he had long since grown used to the way Jim could make people stop and listen.

"What do you want?" The Elder who had first appeared on the screen spoke. He didn't sound particularly friendly.

"For ourselves - nothing," Kirk replied. "But we may be able to help you prevent the spread of the disease that's killing your colony. Even cure it. Your situation is getting desperate - you know it, I know it. You may not know of Vulcan scientific ability - but believe me, my Science Officer here has a better chance of helping you than your own doctors. Think - what reason would we have to lie? Even if you distrust us - surely you can see that we don't want to catch this sickness either? And what can you lose by allowing us to try?"

"A logical argument, Jim," Spock said quietly so that only Kirk could hear. And the Elders were at least listening. Though he didn't think convincing them would be easy. Perhaps he was not the best judge of Human desperation; but the Elders showed every appearance of being at their wits' end. The spokesman appeared to come to a decision within himself, and Spock realised the man didn't look merely exhausted - he looked ill.

"Go on," said the man. "We will listen. But I doubt we shall be convinced."

Kirk was sitting on a laboratory stool, quietly waiting as he had been doing during all the long hours while Spock, aided by the New Terran scientific staff as best they could, searched to find the elusive answers to halting the spread of the disease. He looked very tired, and Spock wasn't at all surprised. No matter how light he had made of his injuries, and how much he had been forced to ignore them as the situation had developed, Spock had been fully aware of them. He'd been doing his best to observe and help unobtrusively, trying to ensure that Jim's physical condition didn't deteriorate - and he didn't think Jim had noticed - at

least, if he had, he hadn't said anything. He knew how much his Captain hated being 'nursemaided' - but also understood that Kirk wouldn't hurt the feelings he denied having by refusing his help and concern.

Now, however, Spock could see that it was all catching up on him; truly, his own injuries had been more serious, but he was Vulcan, and therefore did recover more quickly - Jim, however, was Human and more vulnerable, no matter how much he characteristically refused to admit his own condition, even to himself, when he thought there was something he thought he ought to be doing for others.

At least all he had been able to do for the past hours was sit and watch Spock working; it could hardly be called 'rest' but at least he had not been straining what strength he had left. Despite that, his face looked quite ashen, and he appeared quite exhausted. At least Spock now knew that he was safe - he wouldn't start displaying any symptoms of the viral disease which Spock had finally identified. And now it seemed he *had* actually found a viable antidote. That news at least ought to make Jim feel a little better, and perhaps it would finally persuade him to get some rest.

"I believe we have found what we were looking for, Jim," said the Vulcan in his usual even tone, crossing the room to join his Captain. "The virus was difficult to isolate - a completely new strain, apparently occurring for the first time on this world. In all probability the antidote should be fast-working and almost 100% effective - Dr. Edwards and his medical staff have already begun administering it."

"Thank God - but what about the time period? There can't be that much time left."

"I do not believe any more of the colonists will die, Jim. In another few hours it probably *would* have been too late for many of them, but not now. Our test subjects are already recovering - and quickly. And another factor you'll be pleased to hear - the general broad spectrum vaccinations most Federation worlds employ should be ample protection against this virus."

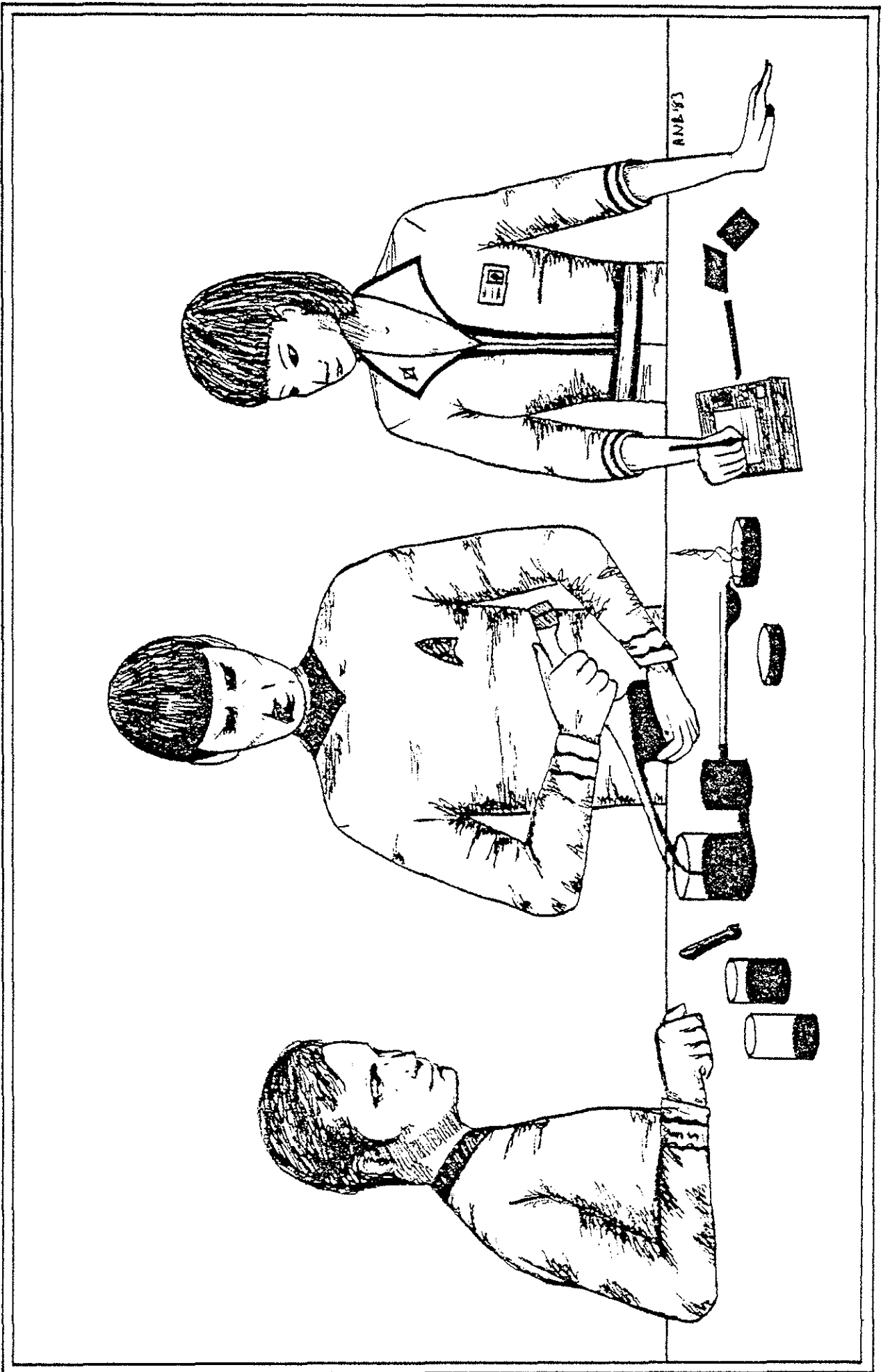
The relief on Kirk's tired face was obvious. "Then if they hadn't shut themselves away here, this wouldn't have happened. But I told you you'd do it, Spock - and I was right!"

"It was you who persuaded them to allow our help. There is little more to achieve by staying here, Jim - perhaps it would be wise for you to get some rest now." Spock tried some diplomacy of his own.

"All right, Mr. Spock - I give in. I'll go quietly - but only if you'll agree to get some rest yourself. I wasn't the one knocked out cold, remember?" The twinkle in Kirk's eye said he knew very well that Spock had been keeping a protective eye on him.

Spock gave his final instructions to the people who had been assisting him, hardly noticing how their attitude towards him had grown infinitely more respectful with the passing of the last few hours. He and Kirk left the laboratory and headed for the wards - there were empty beds in the ward where they'd first been, and both knew rest would go a long way towards restoring them to full health. Besides, they knew full well that if they both looked terrible when the Enterprise finally came for them, McCoy would have them both in sickbay for a month.

Standing silently by a bench, Rowan Mason watched them go, hardly able to credit that such people really did exist. They'd done so much for New Terra in a very short time - and she didn't just mean the virus. How



they'd done it, she'd never know - how they had ever managed to persuade the Elders to allow them to help - well, that in itself was nothing short of a miracle! The grapevine had it that Captain Kirk had needed to do a lot of hard talking to convince them - and if it hadn't been for the desperate predicament they'd all been in, she doubted if the stick-in-the-mud Elders would have ever changed their minds. But when faced with the choice of either watching their beloved colony and all its people slowly die, or accepting the long-feared outside aid, the choice had become a lot simpler.

Especially when Kirk had revealed that they had recovered their communication devices, taken from them on their imprisonment. They hadn't needed to stay at all - as soon as their Starship had arrived, they could have been transported up and no-one would have been any the wiser. Chances would have been that they would both have escaped the virus - at least for long enough to get back to their ship, if they had run away from the town and hidden themselves.

But they hadn't - they had chosen instead to stay and repeat their offer of help, even after the way they'd been treated. And the influential Elder Kent had been most impressed with the way Captain Kirk had carried his injured friend across the desert. She knew now that Dr. Edwards had been, too, no matter what he said earlier. The fact that Elder Kent had been about to come down with the virus himself just might have been a factor too, she thought with a cynicism that surprised herself.

And the Vulcan himself... Well, he'd changed everyone's minds. The way he had worked towards finding that antidote - it seemed that many of the things they had heard about Vulcan brain power and physical strength and stamina were true - but the awful things, like not caring, and being harsh and cold, were not. Mr. Spock certainly wasn't like that, anyway.

Even Dr. Edwards, in his relief at the antidote's discovery, had admitted to her that he supposed Outworlders did, after all, know what loyalty and friendship meant. She was very glad he wouldn't now get into trouble for not immediately reporting to the authorities the presence of the Outworlders in the hospital. She still couldn't quite understand why he'd done that. Had he always been subconsciously sympathetic to the things she and the other young New Terrans believed in? He'd certainly been willing to accept the offered assistance...

Another thing to thank the strangers for. Now it looked like there could be change without upheaval - with the new respect for the Federation, won by the two who had just left looking like death warmed up, the pair of them - the Elders would listen to the younger ones who wanted change, now. It was even rumoured that old stone-faced Elder Kent was going to request that the Federation actually send diplomatic representatives to New Terra, after all this time. It was almost like a dream come true.

Yes, those two certainly brought miracles in their wake. Recovery for the dying - and maybe, maybe now the impossible would happen, and she would get to see the stars.

It was beginning to look as if McCoy would never stop grumbling about archaic medical methods and doctors who wouldn't know how to use a decent protoplaser if they saw one, so Spock decided it was time for direct action.

"Dr. McCoy - are you actually advocating the use of modern medical machinery in Aesculapian treatment?" said the Vulcan innocently from his bed in the Enterprise's sickbay. "I have always believed you would prefer

to use more... ethnic methods."

Spock - I'll never change my mind that a good doctor can *never* be replaced by any computerised marvels," McCoy replied, quickly warming to the argument. While Spock wanted to debate, it was a good sign that he wasn't feeling too bad. "Of course, if you like I can always use the more... old-fashioned methods next time you wind up here. You know you only have to say the word, Spock."

The Vulcan looked as if he was going to respond with one of his typically McCoy-beating comments - then obviously he thought better of it. "Actually, Doctor - in this case I will freely admit that I would rather be here than in the New Terran medical complex. While their intentions may have been good, their methods and equipment were slightly... outmoded."

Now it was McCoy's turn to almost lose his eyebrows in his hairline. "Well - thank you, Spock." The unexpected half-compliment had rendered the CMO uncharacteristically lost for words. "And I must say you did a good job down there - it wasn't easy isolating an antidote under those conditions. I'll admit myself that a good bio-comp is worth its weight in gold - as those medieval people have surely discovered. We can't all calculate like Vulcans."

"Indeed, Doctor." Spock accepted the praise graciously, not even bothering to comment that at present values a bio-comp was worth far more than the monetary value McCoy had suggested.

"I don't believe it!" Kirk struggled to sit up in the bed next to Spock's. He was practically spluttering. "I'm beginning to think I'm delirious or something! If it takes this kind of trouble to get you two to be nice to each other for once..." Words failed him, and he sank dramatically back down.

McCoy chuckled. Jim's sense of humour reassured him about his other friend. They'd both be fine, given a little rest. Of course, it wouldn't be long before they'd both be arguing with him, wanting to go back on duty before either of them was really ready. But it could have been worse... far worse. He didn't want to go through that kind of worry again. Kirk's signal from the malfunctioning shuttlecraft had set the whole Enterprise worrying about her Captain and First Officer. Then they'd had to go off on that emergency mission to Ophicius; ironically, with medical supplies to combat an epidemic there. Scotty had hated having to take the ship off; but he'd had no choice. McCoy knew he'd never get used to the idea that even top officers were considered expendable where necessary. No Human - or Vulcan, for that matter - was expandable as far as he was concerned.

Ophicius II's outbreak of Rigellian fever had soon been got under control, though - they had competent people there, and all the Starship had really needed to do was drop off the supplies. So they'd turned round and headed back as soon as they could. If Kirk hadn't got off that signal the search might have taken longer - but the message had said that they were going to try for a forced landing on New Terra - which had narrowed the search area more than considerably.

And despite the crash, and everything that had happened after, they were both going to be perfectly all right. It wasn't the first time that McCoy had begun to think that someone was definitely watching over those two.

"Of course, I could always accuse him of practising medicine without a licence - if it makes you feel any better," McCoy replied. "But I won't. We both know what would have happened to those damn fool colonists if Spock hadn't been able to help. Of course, the training I've given him helped a

lot... "

This time Spock opened his mouth with every intention of making one of his more usual comments - but Kirk forestalled him with a serious question to McCoy.

"The colony - you really think it'll be all right, then?"

"We're pretty sure about that," McCoy confirmed gladly. "That new virus shouldn't cause any more deaths - not if the Federation team they've requested to help has anything to do with it. Kinda makes you believe in destiny."

"Destiny, Dr. McCoy?" Spock, for once, was clearly at a loss.

"Look at your own findings." McCoy tried to explain what he meant. "That virus - which no-one's got round to giving a name yet, by the way - has originated on New Terra. A product of that colony world. Appearing for the first time only now."

"What has that got to do with destiny, precisely, Doctor?" Spock still couldn't see it.

"Oh - it's quite logical, Spock," McCoy went on. "It appeared at exactly the right time to force the New Terrans to seek outside aid. And you two just happened to be there. Now in all likelihood they'll take some kind of part in Federation life. If that virus hadn't appeared now, at this particular moment - it could have been years and years before they'd come to realise that playing ostrich isn't the way."

"I see," replied Spock, continuing the mood; now wasn't the time to pretend he still didn't understand the expression. "I am not sure that I entirely agree with the philosophy, Doctor - but I take your point."

"You two agreeing again?" said Kirk with exaggerated disbelief. "Hey, Bones - you said they haven't named the virus yet. You don't think there's any chance they'll name it after Spock, do you?"

"Well..... " McCoy started to say, a wicked gleam in his eyes.

"I would prefer the antidote to be named after me, rather than the virus; if I have the choice," the Vulcan said firmly. "And another irony presents itself - the virus may have actually been some help to New Terra. Nurse Mason told me before we left that many of the younger colonists had become disillusioned with their cloistered way of life, in all probability a movement wanting change would soon have sprung up. Now it appears they may have that change - without upheaval."

"All this philosophy is going to make me feel ill!" Kirk grumbled - but his grin showed how pleased he was at the openness between his two friends that day. "But since you're both at it, I'm going to join in. It's good to know that the Human spirit to discover the unknown, that questing, driving urge to achieve and improve, is always there. It would have brought New Terra into the Federation eventually - even if all this hadn't happened to speed things up. Did I tell you that both Mason and Edwards plan to apply to the Federation for extra medical training? They're both going to get out here; see the galaxy. And be able to benefit the colony."

"Indeed, Captain. I believe that your original appraisal of the New Terrans was correct. They are basically good people. Only the Elders' rigid attitudes held them back - it is not the first time we have come across this type of situation."

"What about the Vulcan belief in non-interference, Spock?" McCoy couldn't resist it.

"I *do* believe in non-interference - you know that, Doctor." Spock refused to be drawn. Just this once he didn't want to argue with McCoy. He and Jim could so easily not have returned to the Enterprise this time -- certainly not the first close shave they'd had, by any means. Perhaps there were some things he ought to tell Jim when the opportunity arose - like how much their friendship really did mean to him. Although he knew Jim *did* already know it - well, perhaps it was only right that he should tell him. And although he couldn't tell McCoy openly how he considered him a friend, too - at this moment he did not feel he could deny that friendship by indulging in a verbal fencing match. "But when the time comes and our help is asked for - then we must give it."

McCoy nodded, abandoning the argument - he did understand.

"Well, it's all right for you two, just lying there - but I've got work to do. And make sure you follow Doctor's orders. I'll know if there's any disobedience - Chapel's got her eye on you. See you later." With that, McCoy left for his office, leaving his two patients even more convinced than ever that the Chief Medical Officer just loved being able to tell them what to do.

Spock looked over at Kirk, making a decision. Perhaps now would be a good time to tell his friend just how much his friendship was valued.

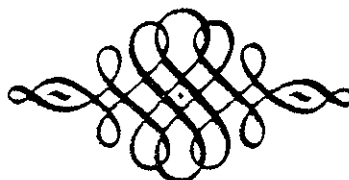
Back in his office, McCoy found it difficult to get down to doing any real work. He kept thinking about Jim and Spock, and what they'd all just been talking about. In a way his own words had made him think about things his subconscious had believed for a long time.

Fate. Destiny. The way his two friends always came through it all - surely no other two people had achieved as much as they had in the last few years. Oh, sure, they were all part of the Enterprise crew - but without those two it wouldn't be the same.

Maybe the Enterprise was meant to happen. And Jim and Spock - McCoy wasn't entirely sure that he did believe in destiny. But surely those two had been meant to meet each other?

The things they could achieve between them were incredible. But they kept on doing it. McCoy sighed and picked up his pen. He had too much paperwork to do to spend time on serious thinking.

Perhaps he'd never understand fully the small miracle his two friends were together. He was just grateful he'd been given the chance to be *their* friend.



A Wand'ring Trekker I

Linda C. Wood

(With sincere apologies to Sir W S Gilbert, and, of course, Nanki-Poo)

A Wand'ring Trekker I
I buy the badges and patches,
Write ballads, poems and snatches,
Sigh silent, gentle sighs
For the crew of the Enterprise.

My catalogue is long
Of many a collector's item.
My friends I all invite 'em
To hear Nimoy sing a song -
I don't keep my friends for long!

Are you in sentimental mood?
Then watch Trek II -
Oh, sorrow, sorrow!
Have you tried Vulcan food?
I did so too.
Oh, sorrow, sorrow!
If you wear pointed ears
Your friends your sanity fears
And you ignore the jeers
While wearing Science blue
Oh, follow, follow!

A wand'ring Trekker I
My clothes are shreds and patches,
I take my food in snatches
Just enough to get by!
To earn more cash I must try!

I go to every con
To see my favourite stars
They hang out in the bars,
Drinking with a Klingon!
How long has this been going on?

